Dreamy Hollow

DREAMY HOLLOW

BY

SUMNER CHARLES BRITTON

A
LONG ISLAND
ROMANCE

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	The House of Mystery	1
II	William Parkins Arrives	19
III	A Message from Winifred	40
IV	A Sudden Departure	49
V	The Hawk Seeks Its Prey	61
VI	Secret Service	77
VII	The New Winifred	96
VIII	Henry Updyke Drops In	115
IX	Forces Beyond the Skies	133
X	The Nurse Takes a Chance	144
XI	Mary Johnson	166
XII	The Third Degree	188
XIII	Winifred Meets Updyke	216
XIV	George Carver's Bride	242
XV	Parkins Runs Amuck	259
XVI	The Hut Across the Bay	279
XVII	The Wolf Hound	288
XVIII	Flight of a Soul	301

DREAMY HOLLOW

CHAPTER I.

THE HOUSE OF MYSTERY

IN THE DAYS of which we write Dreamy Hollow could be reached by three convenient routes—automobile, aeroplane, or motor boat through Great South Bay. But to have gone there without invitation would have spoiled the welcome, for the master of this magnificent acreage was a man of square jaw, protruding forehead, and by nature punctilious. He also possessed two deep blue eyes that set far back under brows of extra overhang—eyes that reflected the soul when tranquil, but in heat of passion, turned to lead.

A forest of trees and kindred foliage protected his gleaming villa from the prying gaze of curious tourists. Only from the water side could it be seen at all. When it was learned that the great concrete walls topped by heavy iron pickets ad-

mitted of no entrance except by invitation, the sight-seeing tourist scorned the gatekeeper's apology and scurried away along the gasoline trail.

For quite a long period much mystery existed as to the ownership of the magnificent estate, but this much was known: that for five straight years the great house stood empty. No one was seen to come or go, save the watchman at the ornate iron gates opening upon the motor parkway, and his fellow guardsmen in charge of the estate far in behind the trees and bushes,—out of sight. It was built by a trust company, and whoever might be the owner, he came by sea at rare intervals and sailed away at night. Only a chosen few had visited him there, but they came as he came, and departed with him as he went away. Thus the wondrous white home with its wealth of trees and shrubs came to be known to the families of neighboring estates as "Spooky Hollow."

Drury Villard, after amassing a most prodigious fortune, suddenly appeared before his directors one bright June morning, and announced his retirement forthwith, whereat there was great

consternation. For a time the silence following his announcement became so tense that, as President, he felt it necessary to say something more definite. Gathered about him were men who had carried his message all over the world and had sold it for cash. Never had they known a human specimen of such overwhelming energy of body and mind. Although strong in themselves, individually, and as a group, they knew they were merely "spokes in the wheel" of a giant intellect. They had carried his banner into every port, and that banner had spelled prosperity for every agency that held it aloft. But the Master Mind would quit! Now he would lay aside his life work and "desert" the greatest organization of its kind in the world! It amounted to just that—desertion—to those who had grown up with the business—their all was involved.

The stern faces of the strong men about him finally brought President Villard to his feet and caused him to walk nervously to and fro across the room. Every eye was upon him, and he knew in advance each man's thoughts, so intimate had his relations been with them. It was his inten-

tion to be frank. He meant to tell them everything about his future plans, but he who had always dominated now halted, ill at ease. For once in his life he exhibited a diffidence of speech in the presence of his directors. They would most likely think his reasons silly—perhaps they would think him crazy! Above all else he wanted, as he well deserved, their lasting good will. Under no circumstances would he forfeit that; but there were certain men in the organization who might feel that he was in the act of jeopardizing their future welfare. Each was a special partner and entitled to the truth, therefore he determined to put his case squarely up to them as a group, regardless of their attitude toward himself. With his hands clasped behind him he finally came to a standstill before them and dreamily peered into their faces.

"Boys," said he, his lips curving into a queer little smile, "I've got to quit—but I won't desert you. I shall do nothing that will subtract from what you have, nor will I retard your progress in pursuit of your goal. I have enough—more than I ever wanted—more than is good for any one man to possess. But for you, untiring faith-

fuls that you are, I should have said 'good-bye' to this great business five years ago."

Being a man of few words he stopped short and leaned back against the wall where he stood as one at bay until the silence became awkward. Then in a soft sympathetic voice a member of his board of directors spoke.

"Why, Mr. Villard—why would you have done this, when at that time your zeal was at its height?"

Vice-President Parkins asked this question in all good humor.

"Because I feared to lose my soul in pursuit of riches that I did not need. Besides, I was building my future home at Dreamy Hollow. I felt that I should need one as I was on the point of marriage. None of you know that, however," concluded the President, with a far-away gleam in his eyes.

Man of silence and strength, he paused for a moment and again paced the floor. Finally he said, simply, a whimsical expression lighting up his face: "She died—but I went ahead and built a home for her just the same. It has taken years to make it into a place she would have

loved. Now, at last, it is ready. Maybe she will hover about it some of the time, so I want to be there. I want to be near at hand, so that——"

President Villard stopped suddenly and looked helplessly about him, for there were strange lights in the eyes of more than one member of the board, and by each man's sobered face was shown a deep sympathy. He looked upon them in amazement, and, suddenly taking his seat at the head of the directors' table, broke out in his accustomed voice.

"Gentlemen," said he, "we must now come to order and proceed with matters to be passed upon by the Board. The first thing is my resignation. In support of that I most earnestly bespeak your hearty concurrence. I must be relieved. Parkins is the man. He has been the real head of this corporation for years—yes, you have Bill," said he, insistently—"and all of us know it. You are the 'System Sam' of the concern, and I won't desert you by any means. Make me Chairman of the Board, if you think best, and I'll come to the annual meeting, or any time you really want me, but I trust that you will find my presence unnecessary. There need be no

outside talk. Just say that I am playing with my new home, but am still in the ring. Go on with the business, boys. It's yours from now on. I'll gradually draw out and let go of some stock from time to time in equal shares to you who have carried the hod. I shall keep some of it always just to be one of you, but at my death my executors will find advices from me to dispose of any remaining interest equitably between you. Also allow you time to work it out, if need be. It's all up to you."

What the retiring president had to say was so entirely unexpected that no member of the board found words for reply, although it was patent to all that a great good fortune had been handed them in a fashion never to be forgotten. After a tense period of silence Vice-President Parkins arose from his seat and, walking forward, grasped the hand of the retiring president. A look into each other's eyes told of their mutual trust and esteem; and then one by one, the directors passed in review, several of whom put an arm about Villard's broad shoulders and peered through the mist of their own eyes into his serious face. It was plain that he wanted to be

sure that each man was satisfied, and when all had paid their tributes of respect he stood before them irresolutely for a moment—then, without looking back, walked out of the room.

Drury Villard carried no heart upon his sleeve. His was a vigorous nature and he was determined that his first real attempt at home life should light his path toward contentment. No one could have dreamed that this indefatigable speciman of the strenuous life could so easily adjust himself to the new order of things. The usual servants, male and female, amply vouched for by expert agencies, had entered quickly and at once became a part of his orderly household. There had been no fussy superintendence on the part of any one, each member of the ménage quietly walking into an appointed place, to take up the duties belonging thereto.

All this was to the liking of the master, whose "stock" was soon "taken" by the experienced coterie of servants who forthwith gave him their approval. Thenceforward his time was his own. He would lead a new life; he would make it his sole business to solve the problem of the real gentleman of leisure. To accomplish this he

must discard by degrees all superfluous endeavor. Every habit of haste and impatience must be thrown overboard. Tranquillity of mind and body must be transplanted in their stead. He had a vague notion that his loneliness would soon vanish and that certain seeds of contentment implanted by fixed habits, together with forces not hitherto encountered, would, in time, lead him "beside the still waters,"—away from the storms of life. He welcomed the thought. It stood out as a rainbow of promise before his mind's eye, and took root within his bosom.

As days followed his occupancy of the great home he had builded, he became aware of the perfect solace which now permeated his inner being. Although assured that he had control of his every faculty he did not gloat over his sudden surcease from sorrow. There was a reason for everything and consequently no need of haste in forming "half-baked" conclusions. He had been helped along by a process yet to be fathomed —most probably *the will to do.* His great home stead, a marvel of exquisite taste, also performed its part in the transformation. But there was something deeper still, an underlying cause, that

mystified him. Then, all at once, a great thought crept forward—was *she* near? Did *she* know *all*—everything about his great longing for *her?* His heart seemed to stand still!

He gazed out of the window; evening shadows had fallen. He had been seated in a huge cushioned chair seemingly for a long time. The room was noiseless but for the deep moaning of the waters of Great South Bay lapping at the beach. Then—vaguely—he thought he heard a voice; "Drury!" it seemed to call.

Villard roused himself and stood upon his feet. He wondered at the calm within him, and with glad voice shouted back: "Winifred! you have called to me! Speak again, dear one! I——"

"There is no death!—There is no death!" came the answer clear and joyous—and then a stillness fell upon the room, so intense that through a heavy metal door could be heard the ticking of a clock in an adjoining room.

Shaken by the experience Drury Villard fell back into the soft upholstery from which position he had heard the voice. He must have time to think! What did it all mean? How much was fact—how much was fancy? Had he been

asleep? Would it not be best to walk out along his private beach and breathe the salt air of the evening tide, thus to tranquilize his mind? There was nothing to brood about—that was his thought. He had witnessed a certain phenomenon, the secret of which time must disclose to him. He would wait, "patiently and without stress of mind," was his sober conclusion. In fact, as he walked out along the sandy path leading to the water's edge he found himself supremely happy over his wonderful adventure. His Winifred had kept the tryst!—such was his impression.

From within the great obscuring veil she had spoken, had called his name,—had fulfilled the promise she had given while in the life!

"'Tis naught for Sun to shine," he quoted. "God works in a mysterious way His wonders to perform. There is no death, says my Winifred. Then must I strive with all my soul to meet her in the great beyond! But I must not brood over this matter. I feel the need of fellowship. I'll send for Parkins and put my story before him. I must have some one in whom to

confide," and forthwith he put his plan into action.

Never was a man more seemingly delighted than William Parkins when a "long distance" call from the Master of Dreamy Hollow invited him over for the week-end.

"I'm just beginning to want to pal with somebody I know. Five weeks is a long time to wait for friends to invite themselves, so I'm going to start in from my end. You're first on the list, and the first invitation is yours. I won't take *no* for an answer."

"You will not have to, my dear fellow. I'm most happy to have the opportunity. Which way shall I go out?"

"My boat will take you on board at your pleasure any time after noon on Friday, and will land you back at the same Forty-second Street Pier at such time as you suggest."

"Well, now, that would be perfectly bully! Let's see—your estate joins the Sawyer Place, does it not?"

"Yes—on the east. His hedgerow is the dividing line between us."

"Then I know exactly how to get to you, so I

shall taxi over," replied Parkins with enthusiasm. "You see I can kill two birds with one stone by stealing away Friday afternoon and motoring over to my fishing hut at Patchogue—wonderful flounders down there! I have my own boat and I want to see what condition she's in, so I'll get over to your place by noon on Sunday. How does that suit your convenience?"

"Nothing could be better."

"Then it's a go—and many thanks. Bye, sir," concluded Parkins, in his usual courteous way.

"Bye, old boy. I await you with great impatience. Speed the day—S'long—keep yourself good."

A delightful sense of anticipation came into the mind of Drury Villard as he hung the receiver. He felt the need of fellowship and upon Parkins' acceptance his great frame took on a certain vigor that called for action. He must hurry the time away that intervened before Parkins should arrive on Sunday. He must make plans. Perhaps Doctor Sawyer of the adjacent estate would join him in a dinner of welcome.

Such a plan would brush away all business talk, sure to take place if Parkins and himself

were left alone the first evening. His idea was to dodge business altogether. Parkins needed a rest, and, as for himself, he had no heart for ordinary commercial chit-chat. He held a great secret in his bosom, a precious secret, and even with so good a friend as Parkins he would be chary of sharing it. For the present, pending the arrival of his visitor, he had much in mind with which to occupy himself. Parkins must find an improvement in him, therefore he would hasten his plan of mastering the secret of composure. His great experience of the afternoon might be repeated if he could but put his mind in condition to receive it. Wonderful thought!—and he would strive to bring it about.

First of all, for the sake of health, another walk along the beach seemed practical, and obeying the impulse, Villard soon found himself strolling leisurely over the path leading to the waters of the bay. He could hear the heavy intonation of the milling tide as it broke upon the sands, long before he reached his destination. Its deep muffled roar was not unlike the reveille of a drum corps in a far-away encampment. As he neared his destination, such was

his serenity of mind that he felt himself in tune with all nature from earth to sky. His whole being thrilled at the wonderful message from his dead love.

"There is no death!" he murmured—and then, in lower tone, almost a whisper, he repeated—"there is no death—my beloved knows the truth!"

"Oh, Winifred," he cried aloft, "speak again to me! Tell me that you are near—that I may hope—that I may——" and then a chilling blast swept over the sands that sent a shiver through his body. A voice shouted—a voice he knew and loved so well. It seemed to say—"Life never dies!"—as clear as ever a human tongue could bear a message. It was the same sweet voice as of old, but all-pervading, seeming to completely encompass the eager man on all sides—and from below, and from above. His eyes opened wide in amazement as he put forth his whole strength to control his senses. A man of iron will, he would not fail himself at such a supreme moment! Near unto him was the spirit of his dead, the soul of his loved one—a second visitation.

"Speak on, my Winifred!" he whispered hoarsely, while attempting to shout his words.

"Life, itself, is everlasting!" rang out the voice once more. "The body dies when the soul takes flight—it is no more in being."

"Yes, go on, my loved one! Tell me——"

"Life is a common fund—endless—vast as the heavens—encompassing all space. Life is universal—it permeates, and through constant vibration animates all living things, from the blade of grass to the human soul—but the body dies, and returns to earth."

"And of the soul, my Winifred? Tell me all that I should know, that I——"

"Within the last moment of your life, when your soul prepares to take its flight, all shall be revealed to you. Your soul is the mentor of your brain, and the master of your conscience. By virtue of its quality will its destiny be governed. . . . So live, my Drury, that when your body dies your soul shall take the flight which leads to everlasting life."

"And we shall meet again, Winifred?—and know each other——"

"The test lies with you. I'll be waiting, Drury —waiting——"

The voice ceased, and Villard, startled by the unfinished sentence, heard a faint sound as if a silken kerchief had fluttered forth upon the breezes. At once the air seemingly regained its usual warmth, the chilling blast following along in the wake of the departing spirit.

Greatly agitated the astonished man looked about him as one who had but just awakened from a dream. Nevertheless he nerved himself into a full control of his faculties as one of his great mental poise is ever capable. He felt sure that his sanity was perfect. He had experienced an extraordinary visitation, but it had left no uncanny feeling within his bosom. His real anxiety, if any, was the fear that the spirit of his loved one had revealed too much—such was her love for him—and that future visitations might thereby be thwarted. Against that possibility he compelled himself to concentrate every force of his intellect and every ounce of his soul—and with that resolve he turned his footsteps toward his home, his body erect, his face illumined —his heart enraptured.

"Winifred!" he whispered, over and over again, and, as he neared his stately mansion—all quiet, serene, and beautiful to look upon—a great wave of regret seized him because *she* had never crossed its threshold "in the life."

CHAPTER II.

WILLIAM PARKINS ARRIVES

THE arrival of William Parkins on schedule time, all energy and activity, completely changed the atmosphere of the peaceful home at Dreamy Hollow. Parkins could not sit still. His face, red with sunburn, seemed that of a dissipated man. He fidgeted in his chair, or paced the floor while talking incessantly about the business and its prospects. He had, since Villard's retirement, become its "steering wheel," according to his own estimation. Others in the great organization who, with no shouting of self-praise, had suddenly become open game for his shafts of criticism. With blearing eyes he asserted that if left to himself he would buy out the interest of two or more stockholders—"dead ones"—he called them, but for the fact that his own contract with Villard had foreclosed upon the possibility. In less than half an hour he had, by hint and inuendo, thrown a wet blanket over the

future prospects of the company. The morale was "bad." A strong man was needed at the helm—that was his verdict. And in amazement Villard listened without a word from his lips. Had the man suddenly gone crazy!—that was his first thought, but—as Parkins continued, Villard became convinced that he was a knave.

"With your approval, Drury," said Parkins, assuming a new familiarity, "I can make a great institution out of the company. It would be no trick for me to put all competition out of business. In fact, I have a plan——"

"What would you do with the present organization?" Drury Villard asked softly, but with a glint in his eyes that should have warned his guest of a lack of sympathy toward such a scheme.

"I'd scrap it!" replied Parkins, with energy.

"Scrap it!"

Villard raised himself to a straight-up sitting posture.

"Completely—and I'll tell you why," replied Parkins, with an air of finality. "The boys are getting along in years. They are old-fashioned. Business has hardened since they started in,

away back there, and they don't seem to know it. 'Let well enough alone' is the invisible motto they seem to see hanging upon the wall. It makes me sick—this nonchalance. They golf Saturdays, go to the shows at night, dine out with their wives, spend a lot of money and come down to business next morning unfit for their duties."

"I'd think they would work with more energy for having taken a little pleasure as they go along—and their wives should share in it!"

Villard smiled into the eyes of his visitor as he awaited his answer, although his soul revolted at the change in the man he had made vice-president of "Villard Incorporated."

"Perhaps they might—more likely they won't," replied Parkins, his voice snappy and hard. "Business is good, all right. Sales are bigger, but that comes from my work, and as complete head of the company, I could give it not only greater national scope but greater international scope as well. I tell you this because you hold the key to the situation, and you'll agree that it takes a blood and iron policy to succeed on a big scale."

"Yes, partly true," replied Villard, whose facial expression gave no clew to his real thoughts. But had William Parkins known the trend of the Villard mind he would have packed his apparel and returned to New York. For a man of his shrewdness his blunder had been colossal. Having enthused himself to believe he was on the right track, and failing to note downright objection on the part of his host toward the trend of his conversation, he began a long drawn out indictment against each member of the company.

"It isn't a case of let well enough alone, even if it is true that we have done especially well," said he. "But my plans mean millions, not hundreds of thousands, and nothing should be allowed to stand in the way of them—not even the men who have grown up with the business. With your help I can buy every interest, and if you consent I'll quadruple your fortune in a couple of years. Of course, I'd keep some of the men. All I need is the nucleus from which to expand —and your consent to proceed."

Parkins' face glowed with pride at the manner in which he had presented his case.

"There is a certain change in your appearance, William, since I last saw you. Anything happened to disturb your mind?" inquired Villard.

"Not a thing, sir. I've been working hard—very hard, Drury. This little trip to Patchogue over the week-ends is about all I do. I like to fish, and drive my car. They are the extent of my pleasures. That's what makes my face red—sunburn!" laughed Parkins.

Villard smiled affably and agreed that the ozone from salt water was almost the elixir of life. Then, referring to Parkins' aspirations to become President of the company, he said:

"I'll think the matter over and let you know before you return to the city. At the moment I'm thinking of the jolly good dinner we're going to have. I've invited Doctor Sawyer to join us. He lives across the hedge and I screwed up the courage to introduce myself. When two sit at a table alone they are apt to talk over business matters, but a third person makes it a party. How's that for an idea?"

"All right, I suppose—three—yes, of course. It is all right, and very thoughtful of you, to be

sure, although I've heard it said that two is company, and three is a crowd. However, I'm delighted at the prospect of meeting the doctor. Is he an old resident—one of our plutocrats?"

"That, I do not know," replied Villard. "His estate is magnificent and his home beautiful. I do hope he will turn out to be sociable. It is not well to dwell too much alone. We must not blight our minds through lack of exercise. The brain should have its share as well as the body. And also a certain amount of rest."

"I presume you are right, although this is the first time I have considered the subject. I give no thought to those matters—time wasted, I'd say."

Parkins, the impatient, did not relish such conversation and would have taken the short cut back to business talk had not the announcement of Doctor Sawyer's arrival stopped him. The introduction to the doctor was without warmth on either side; the regulation pump handle shake of the hands left both without a word or a smile for each other. Drury Villard was quick to notice that neither guest regarded the other more than casually.

"Mr. Parkins is connected with our company, and since my retirement from business has presided over the Board meetings," volunteered Villard.

"Indeed!" responded the Doctor gravely.

"Yes, and I am making things hum!" added Parkins. "It will be a long time before I shall want to hibernate, even in such a lovely spot as this. Action, action—I crave it! I must keep on the jump. Very pretty down here, though. Both of you have been prodigal with your money, but I'll wager neither of you could sell for the amount you've spent."

For several long seconds no answer came from either the host or his neighbor. Finally the latter broke the silence by saying, "ahem!" Drury Villard, however, did give Parkins a sharp look; then almost rudely said:

"Perhaps each of us should decide for himself how he shall spend his means. 'One man's food is another man's poison'—according to an old saying that still holds true."

"Yes, all very well," persisted Parkins, "but the wealth both of you have poured into your estates might easily have endowed a great hospital,

or capitalized a huge business, giving employment to many people."

At this point Mr. Sawyer frowned, and with his fingers nervously thrumbed the arm of his chair. But he said nothing in reply. Fortunately announcement was made that dinner was ready to be served,—and much to the relief of the host, whose amazement at Parkins' poor taste was only equaled by his embarrassment. At once he rose from his seat and led the way to the dining hall, a great amphitheater with high ceiling starting from the main floor and reaching to the top of the second story. Never before had the master of Dreamy Hollow dined "in state" in his own home, preferring as he did the breakfast room, unprententious and more inviting—or a nook on a side portico overlooking the garden of roses, and the inlet from the bay. Every appointment at this great dining hall was in keeping with its huge dimensions and the accoustics accentuated the voices of those gathered at the very large table in its center.

"I have never summoned the courage to dine at this table since I came here to live," laughed Villard. "I have been so long completing the

house that I have not had time to try it on to see how it would fit."

"Most generous and beautiful," said Dr. Sawyer. "I am deeply impressed with your construction plan. I made a failure of my main dining room. Too small by far. I must do some tearing out and rebuilding. By the way, have you given your estate a name?" queried the doctor.

"Dreamy Hollow," replied Villard.

"I've heard it called Spooky Hollow," laughed Parkins, whose humor ever contained a dash of acid. Then noting the frown upon Dr. Sawyer's brow the subject was changed, Parkins taking the lead. Evidently the doctor had failed to appreciate the little joke at the expense of his host.

"By the way," said Parkins, "there is a large institution out West called the Sawyer Dietarium. Was it named after you, Doctor?"

"Now, ah—I believe it was, although I beg you to believe that I was opposed to the idea," replied Sawyer, who added—"although I am a medical doctor I did not practice medicine. My specialty was that of scientific diet, but they would call me doctor."

Parkins' face flushed red at the thought of his recent rudeness toward his fellow-guest. In an effort to straighten out matters he slapped his hands upon the table and gave voice to a nervous sort of laughter.

"Well, well! I did you a great injustice, Dr. Sawyer, and I beg your pardon," said he, most courteously. "You have really been useful to mankind, after all."

"No apologies, please," replied Sawyer, affably. "I am always sympathetic with those who jump at conclusions. Ah—by the way, I have heard that Mr. Villard, our host, was most prodigal when he retired from active business, going so far as to turn over to his organization the complete running of the institution in order that each man should have the ready made opportunity of becoming substantially rich. I don't know the facts, nor did I hear them from our modest host. The point is this, that whether or not he may ever endow a charity his record for generosity toward the men who helped him to build his great business has been warmly complimented by many leading financiers who know the facts. Unless his example should yield poor re-

sults I am prone to believe that other rich men, on retiring, will follow his lead. No plan should be followed wholesale, as it were, until some sort of tabulation as to its merits are consulted. The Villard experiment is being watched with great interest."

"Spied upon?" questioned Parkins, sharply. "I wouldn't be surprised if it is!"

"Nonsense, Mr. Parkins! Business is reputable in these happy days. No one concern can get it all. Old animosities and jealousies have been cast aside. Business is becoming standardized, and, I am happy to hope—humanized. Mercantile warfare is all but a thing of the past. Only the upstart and the unsophisticated engage in cut-throat competition these days. The stronger the organization in brains and honesty, the greater the outlook for success."

Strange to say, William Parkins found no words with which to combat the logic set forth by Dr. Sawyer. That he felt himself to be entirely out of the argument showed in his demeanor. Being no fool, however, he saw that his advantage lay in getting away from the subject, and that he proceeded to do. He could feel the searching

eyes of the veteran as spotlights upon himself, eyes that were unafraid—stern but fair, as shown by the kindly twinkle that crept into them—likewise the smile that seemed to bid for good-fellowship all around. That there should be no awkward period of silence, Dr. Sawyer changed the subject.

"I am very much interested in a book I picked up recently, entitled, 'The Naked Truth'—most readable indeed. I try to laugh it out of my mind, but still find myself reading along without being bored. Thus far the author has made a pretty fair case in behalf of eternal life. There is no death, he says, and puts up an argument that I am not able to cope with. I have no license, no desire to dispute his statements."

"All rot!" exclaimed Parkins. "Of course you took no stock in it! There is positively nothing known beyond the grave—I'd bet my head on that."

As he looked around for support Parkins noted that his host had suddenly turned pale, also that his hand trembled, and his fork had fallen into his plate. Fearful that he might have antago-

nized Villard in some ardent belief, he was glad when Dr. Sawyer came to the rescue.

"I do not believe any one is competent to designate this author's theories as rot," said the visitor. "He might be as well assured of his ground as Mr. Parkins is of his. Perhaps he has had experience not yet a part of Mr. Parkins' stock of knowledge! As a fact, we have all been taught from childhood of a great reunion in store for us. The Bible is authority for that. Is Mr. Parkins able to support a theory to the contrary?"

Sawyer tried to catch Parkins' eyes, but they were fixed upon his plate. He then turned toward his host with a remark when he noticed the pallor of Villard's face, and the trembling of his hands resting upon the edge of the table.

"Are you ill, Mr. Villard?" he inquired, solicitously.

The host looked up and attempted to smile away the inference. But instead, something from within prompted him to say:

"I have every reason to believe that the dead have power to communicate with the living."

"You have!" exclaimed Doctor Sawyer, looking sharply at his host.

"It is true—I have experienced——" then Drury Villard halted abruptly and looked anxiously into the faces of both guests. Each seemed greatly surprised at his partial answer. Perhaps they doubted. Therefore, to a certain extent he would enlighten them.

"I have witnessed the greatest phenomenon possible to occur. Within a few days I have talked with some one whom I knew in the life!"

After Villard's solemn declaration there followed a long pause. Parkins' face became very grave, but there was a sharp, quizzical look in his eyes. There sat the paramount stockholder of the corporation over which he craved ultimate control. Once in that position complete ownership might easily be made to pass along to himself. A person in Drury Villard's state of mind surely needed legal guardianship—that was his notion—therefore, "why not, by legal action, become that guardian!"

This thought, on the spur of the moment, took root at once, and craftily, and through semblance of friendly credulity, Parkins began to work

upon the good graces of his host. He at once decided to humor Villard in all things put forth in behalf of his uncanny belief.

As to Sawyer he could, perhaps, through subtle diplomacy, make of him an innocent ally. But extreme caution would be necessary—he would have to change his tactics, agree to the Sawyer code of ethics, and above all, build up in him a strong sympathy for Villard, because of his affliction.

"While I am much surprised at your declaration, Drury," said Parkins, "I can truly say that you have struck the one chord nearest my heart. Brain, body and soul, I believe in immortality."

Parkins' voice had now become soft and gentle, and a winning smile was upon his lips. He observed Villard's keen eyes searching him for the truth. It was a dangerous test to invite but it was successful, the host finally relaxing into a state of calm. Having accepted Parkins' overture as bona fide, Villard, with a sigh of relief, proceeded.

"I do not know why I have disclosed my secret," said he, looking calmly into the placid

face of Dr. Sawyer. "Probably because it reflected the yearnings of my soul. Involuntarily I seem to have sought the loyalty of my guests toward the truth of my statement."

"Of course, it is true, Mr. Villard," responded Sawyer. "Why not? While I have never actually heard voices from the outer world I have always yearned for, and expected, a message from my wife. Also I have believed with certainty that I would hear her voice in all naturalness—sometime. Indeed I have prayed for just that. It is bound to come—I am sure of it," he finished with a gulp.

"There is nothing more strange than our own living presence as we sit here at this table," declared Parkins soberly. "Truly the phenomena of death and resurrection are no greater than life itself. But it is all so very unaccountable that I have only my unshakable belief to make me steadfast in behalf of my senses."

"Would you care to say more in relation to your communication with a spirit from the other world?" asked Sawyer, addressing himself to Villard.

"Perhaps, sometime—but not to-night. I must

make sure that I am perfectly sane, and that what I say will be regarded as truth—not a mirage of the brain. I must not be set down by either of you as a crazy man—or even a morbid thinker."

"Quite right, Mr. Villard," responded Sawyer, who had begun to notice Parkins' nervous attitude. "That would be most unfair, considering your successful career."

"The world is not ready to believe in the return of souls to comfort the living," continued Drury Villard. "I shall strive the harder for another contact with the presence of that wonderful spirit. I knew her in the life, and I loved her. She would have been my wife years ago, but for her untimely death. Now that I so greatly need her she has found a way through the great veil to give me cheer."

As Villard finished his declaration, Dr. Sawyer gave vent to an audible sigh. His sympathy was bona fide; a fellowship for his host had taken root in his heart. Parkins had become most solemn in his attitude, his face denoting a real sympathy for the older men who were striving for knowledge concerning their departed loved

ones. A guilty feeling of disloyalty caused him to wonder if his plans might not be disclosed to both Villard and Sawyer through the same voice Drury had heard. A creepy sensation ran through him at the mere thought of exposure. Notwithstanding his misgivings he believed both men were suffering under a delusion born of a desire to hear from their dead. Of the two, Sawyer was the more nearly sane. This was his estimate between them, but Villard seemed the more pliable.

Parkins' own plans were far too important to himself to spoil with overhaste, therefore he resolved that all necessary time should be taken, might it be a day, a month, or a year. The game was worth the candle. He would play in this one according to the opportunity offered by each, patiently awaiting the moment when he might safely spring his legal trap on Drury Villard.

"I have often tried to find the *open sesame* to the spirit world but perhaps I am too earthly to succeed," volunteered Parkins after a lengthy pause. "What can you tell me, gentlemen, that will give me a lead toward the door of the unknown?"

"I know nothing whatever," averred Dr. Sawyer, with lips tightened. "Perhaps Mr. Villard may have something to offer."

"Absolutely nothing, gentlemen. I've told you of my experience without going into detail. I do not claim to know anything, which is exactly the attitude of those great thinkers, Edison, Lodge, and Conan Doyle. Edison is said to believe that he can invent an apparatus so delicate that it may record communications from the outside. But I had no such instrument. I simply heard a voice that I knew, and I'd give everything I have in the world to hear that voice again —there! Did you hear that?"

Drury Villard looked up, and around about him. Parkins' face grew pale but he avoided the searching eyes of his host.

"Winifred!" shouted Villard, as he gazed abstractedly about the great dining hall, and into the eyes of his guests. But he did not see them.

On hearing the name Winifred, Parkins' eyes opened wide, as he searched Villard's face.

"Yes—yes, I hear you," continued Villard—"yes, dear heart—go on—you say to—what! My God! Can it be true?" Then, glaring at Par-

kins, he exclaimed:—"Yes, it is true—I can see the situation clearly. No!—it shall never be!"

Parkins shuddered with apprehension, as Villard's jaws snapped together, and for a full half minute his eyes looked down upon the white damask table covering. When he raised them he glanced swiftly at his host and then turned with an apologetic smile toward Sawyer.

"I have an acquaintance by the name of——" the sentence remained unfinished—Villard's face flaming with anger.

"I know you will pardon me if I ask that we change the subject," said the host in his usual tone of voice, and without a tremor of excitement. "With no volition of my own I have undergone another experience. I have nothing to say on the subject and will beg that no questions be asked at this time. Let us have coffee and cigars, Jacques," said he, addressing the head servant, at the same time eyeing his guests in an open, cordial way. His glance at Parkins was searching, but the latter seemed entirely at ease, and in full sympathy.

"Permit me to say that I intuitively comprehend all that has occurred," said Dr. Sawyer to

his host. He then turned his eyes upon Parkins, but that gentleman avoided the gaze, although from no real understanding of its significance.

"You heard no strange voice, Mr. Parkins?" questioned Sawyer.

"Voice! I heard Drury talking to some one, or something, invisible to me. I heard no reply —seemed to me as though he had suddenly gone crazy!"

"Crazy—Yes! Most likely you would think that!" replied Sawyer, sternly. "Sometimes old friendships dissolve through lack of sympathetic understanding."

"But I don't understand, sir!" replied Parkins with a composure well feigned. Glancing hastily toward Villard he asked with eyes widely opened —"What has happened?"

Villard gazed back at him soberly before replying. Then finally after due thought he said, somewhat harshly—

"We will talk the matter over at another time. By the way, let us have the coffee and cigars outside, gentlemen. I have a wonderful outlook that will give us a glimpse of the rising of the moon, now due. Its glow over the waters of good old South Bay lends wonderful effects."

CHAPTER III.

A MESSAGE FROM WINIFRED

FROM a nook balcony and for more than an hour the three men bathed in the beauty of a gorgeous moonlit night. Over their coffee and cigars they drank in a grandeur of gleam and shadow over sea and land with little in the way of conversation to mar the serenity of a perfect night. Each had thoughts personal to himself and the inclination of all seemed to be that of introspection.

Of the three, Parkins maintained the more silent mood. Had he been incautious? He wondered if Villard had really been warned against him by a message of some sort, or was he subject to vagarious meditations by reason of his loneliness? As for himself, he was far too practical to admit that there might be such a thing as real spiritual communication. At any rate, there was yet a preponderance of belief to the contrary. He knew of certain persons who had been con-

fined in sanitariums for asserting queer notions on the order of "pipe dreams." Thus next friends had, by order of court, taken them in charge and put them where, in his opinion, they belonged. If friends refused to act the law stepped in and managed the case in behalf of the public welfare.

It was along this line of reasoning that Parkins finally made up his mind to execute his plans at all hazards. His consuming idea of becoming tremendously rich depended upon his success in securing control of a majority holding of "Villard Incorporated." He longed for wealth and power, to gain which he must use the weapons best fitted to the task—diplomacy first, force if called for—and he would lose no time!

It would be necessary to watch Sawyer carefully—"a very canny old gentleman, who might cause trouble," was his thought. To win him would require a diplomacy of the highest order. He must be primed with the right sort of propaganda concerning the Villard hallucination and prove it to Sawyer's satisfaction—then all would go well. He would first turn them into "old cronies," as it were; cause them to strike up a

most intimate acquaintance wherein the strength of Sawyer's will power could be utilized in behalf of the Villard weakness. Indeed, Sawyer must be so convinced of Villard's need of a next friend, wholly disinterested, except for his mental welfare, that no court in the land would deny him legal guardianship. Thenceforth the path would be clear of obstruction. Having formed in outline a plan of action, Parkins broke the silence by saying—

"Never have I seen so much beauty in moonlight. It is almost as bright as day."

"Glorious!" responded Sawyer, after several moments of hesitation.

Enthralled by the peacefulness of the situation he had not cared for small conversation. Villard, evidently buried in thought, remained silent. He wondered what manner of girl was the Winifred of whom Parkins had spoken, but he asked no questions. He also wondered as to Parkins' intentions toward her.

"If the sunrise over the Alps is half as grand as the sheen on the waters reflecting this moon, I can see myself buying a ticket that way soon,"

said Parkins, airily. "Would you care to go along, Drury?"

The question went unanswered overlong, so absorbed was Villard with his own thoughts. Reminded of the fact that he had guests to entertain he sat up quite suddenly and gave attention to Parkins' query.

"All that is in the background with me. I've seen every part of it; been everywhere worth going. This is the spot where my dreams will come true. Here I will live—and here I will die."

"Right," agreed Sawyer. "I am glad you have come to stay. If ever a man needed comradeship it is myself. I shall haunt you, Mr. Villard, and your beautiful home, unless you agree to become a downright good neighbor who will swap visits often."

"I shall esteem it a high privilege to visit you, often," replied Villard. "You must come over the hedge every time you have the courage to choose a poor companion. Of late I have been so much alone that I need a course of training in order to become sociable. I'm willing to make a great try of it and will hope for success. You have seen me at my weakest to-night—perhaps

you may never catch me again in the same mood, Dr. Sawyer. But I know you are a man of deep sympathies and that we shall be good neighbors."

"That, we must be," replied Sawyer fervently, "and now I shall be going for I am old enough in years to practice regularity. It is my bedtime—a little past the accustomed hour, so I will shake hands and be gone! We must get together soon again."

Then turning toward his fellow guest he bowed stiffly, but made no offer of his hand in parting.

"An ill omen," thought Parkins, as he threw himself into bed an hour later. "Things were not working just right," he admitted to himself, but that his goal should be reached in due time, he promised himself. "The pyramids were not built over night"—were his last muttered words before the cool air crept in from the Sound and sent him into a restless sleep.

Out on a window balcony Drury Villard, thoroughly awake, and protected from the cold by a heavy steamer blanket, sat motionless, with eyes wide open and mind obsessed with the incidents of the evening. Of the Parkins episode he very much desired to rid his mind, for, after all, he

most likely stumbled into an awkward position by reason of his too practical nature. On thinking over the past he could not help but give him credit for having earned his promotion to actively head the Villard Company. He had known him as a boy—and he was now the active head of Villard Incorporated—an expert financial man. All through their years together he had been loyal, good natured, and successful in the big part he had undertaken. No higher compliment could have been paid him than that Villard's mantle of authority should fall upon his shoulders. In the light of events the question was whether or not Parkins would be capable of standing up under prosperity and great future prospects. Had an exalted ego taken possession of his once cool, analytical mind? Was he now loyal to all hands in the organization, and to Villard himself? Or had he turned traitor through anxiety to become the master of a great fortune?

After much weighing of the situation Villard decided that the matter warranted certain tests continued over a goodly period of time. He held in reserve a wholesome pity for the man who so

lightly esteemed the golden opinion that he had honestly won, and he pledged himself toward leading him back to his normal self. With that in mind as a policy to be pursued, he rang for light inside and wandered his way to bed.

When Drury Villard had laid his head upon his pillow all forebodings passed away, leaving him at peace in mind and body. There was no weariness because of his duties as a host. He owed himself a good night's rest and with every intention to obey the call he shut his eyes and calmed his brain. Almost at the point of complete repose a vague and dreamy impression that some one was calling from far away came into his mind. He seemed to hear his name, and whispered so softly as to be almost inaudible. Apparently it was the voice of Winifred, and the very stillness of the night seemed boisterous by comparison. Her nearness had the effect of tingling the blood in his veins as she breathed his name—and then, with the softness of a leaf falling upon the grass beneath a low hung bough, the voice continued—

"All that is good is saved—the dross goes back to earth to enrich the soil—but the soul is di-

vine! It never dies! Its homeward flight is nature's plan of purification—but once returned it rests, and awaits the call to go forth and serve a new-born babe of corresponding mould. Thus is inclined the congenital tendency of the human strain when mixed, and provides a natural deviation by which no two human beings are exactly alike. All nature adheres to the selfsame principle."

"And we both shall live again, my Winifred?" breathed Villard.

"We shall, but worlds there are without number, and the same universe holds all. What shall be my further progress I do not know. Enough to say of The Great Beyond that it offers rest and requitement to all souls released from the ills and sorrows of earthly habitation. Farewell, my Drury; another Winifred will come into your life ere long. I shall strive to hover near when you need me most. Meanwhile watch thy way and beware of the pitfalls that will beset thy path."

Now, suddenly, Villard raised himself to sitting posture. So intent had been his mind upon the whispered words of his loved one that her

spirit had gone its way before he could command his voice to speak. As in a dream he buried his face upon his pillow, thereby to control his pent up emotions, and also to recount and memorize the exact words that she had spoken. This accomplished, he sighed deeply and lapsed into slumber. Later on he became restless and was startled into partial wakefulness. The one word *"beware"*—was faintly whispered, but drowsiness overcame his effort to understand although he rolled and tossed from side to side.

CHAPTER IV.

A SUDDEN DEPARTURE

DRURY VILLARD was not the only one at "Dreamy Hollow," who failed to enjoy a full night of repose. There was William Parkins, guest, and erstwhile trusted friend, whose brain teemed with plans by which he might get control of the Villard estate. A score of times he turned over in bed to escape the penalty of a sleepless night. Somewhere among the small hours approaching the light of a new day he succumbed to fatigue and had fallen into a weary doze. His last thought on going to sleep was the urgency of quick action if his plans were to succeed. His advantage lay in the present mental state of Drury Villard, whose mind, he was convinced, must border upon the edge of insanity. Hence the need of restraint, and no sane judge would dare deny a writ of sequester to a next friend pending a period of isolation while awaiting the final decree of the Court. Villard's great fortune

should not be allowed to "dangle" in plain sight of "jack-leg lawyers," while he, Parkins, awaited final results of the proceedings.

During the hours he had given himself over to thoughts concerning the Villard matter Parkins' mind had been cold toward any conscientious scruple. In his judgment Villard's foolish notion that he could communicate with the soul of a dead sweetheart was as good as a free ticket to a sanitarium. Any judge would have to admit that. Nothing less than providential interference could defeat the plan. The first thing to be done was to select a lawyer of reputation and prestige. Until that was decided, no important step could be taken, except to find out how Sawyer would regard the situation. If he balked, naturally complication would ensue, but the lawyer Parkins had in mind would brook nothing in the way of nonsense. He could, if desirable, put Villard in an asylum. As for Sawyer, he would be given to understand that any interference from him would result in an investigation of his own peculiar views, he having practically coincided with Villard's belief that the latter had heard the voice of his dead love.

Dr. Sawyer had intimated plainly that he, too, had heard that voice and understood the warning words about outside influences. He wondered if Jacques, the servant who served the dinner, had witnessed Villard's excitement and understood the cause of it. He decided to find out about that matter on the following day. Meanwhile he would take one more pill—then he would rest—"sleep"—he muttered. "I must be ready for 'big game' hunting to-morrow."

With this determination he closed his eyes and fell into a nervous slumber. But an hour later Parkins found himself sitting upright in bed and screaming with fear at the top of his voice. Several servants and a night watchman soon surrounded him, the watchman holding an electric torch with which he flashed a flood of light into the face of the guest. Santzi, the Japanese attendant, and personal servant to Drury Villard, had awakened his employer, and together they rushed to the chamber occupied by the guest. The latter, wild-eyed and disheveled, stared at his host and moaned. Then wildly, he shouted—

"It was you who planted a spook in this cham-

ber! You have tried to frighten me into your insane belief, but you've missed your guess! You'll pay for this—you'll——"

"There now, William," soothed Villard—"calm yourself, my boy. Your digestion is off—you've had a bad dream! Don't give way to such unworthy thoughts. Don't you see that everything is all right?"

"A put up job—that's what I see! Neither you nor any one else in this world can make a fool out of me! It's *you* that is crazy—not I. It's you that pretends to talk with dead people! In fact, it was you who put up this scheme to scare me. You wanted to win me over into a looney state of mind like yourself, but it didn't work! Now, sir, I'm done with you!"

Parkins' eyes blazed with a mad light in each and his breath smelled of drugs. In his rage he had thwarted his own plans and now comprehended to the full extent the mess he had made of them. He demanded privacy from the servants that he might clothe himself and be ready to take his leave by first conveyance. He also demanded that Villard remain with him for a conference, which was granted. Once the door

was shut against all witnesses, Parkins sat upon the edge of the bed and cried like a child.

"There is nothing I can say to remove the prejudice I must have aroused within you, Drury. Of course you will acquit me of bad intentions. It must have been a nightmare," he whimpered.

The bravado had entirely gone out of the Parkins' voice. Several moments elapsed as Villard eyed him carefully.

"Just what did you see, William? Tell me exactly what caused your fright."

Villard's words were measured. They lacked warmth, a fact that Parkins could not have failed to take into account.

"Some one stood by my bedside—a woman's form—not in the flesh——"

"Yes—go on!"

"It stood there, motionless, and the room became as cold as ice. I tried to shout but my voice refused to respond. All I could do was to gasp for breath!"

"How long did the apparition remain in view?" demanded Villard, his eyes gleaming his disgust toward Parkins.

"A half minute or a minute—seemed like an

hour!" he replied, his teeth chattering from sheer fright.

"Did the Spirit talk—say anything at all?"

"Not a word—just held up a hand as if warning me of something——"

"Ah! there I have it," broke in Villard. "You were warned that your plans were known to me. And that is true. You have lost your soul, William, and were you to die without repentance, it would roam through the ages, lost to all chance of redemption."

"But I don't owe repentance to any dam'd spook! I——"

"Enough of that, sir!" snapped Villard wrathfully. "I'll have no nonsense of that sort! Another insult and your baggage will await you at the carriage entrance."

"But, Drury——"

"Hereafter you will address me as Mister Villard. Our intimacy is at an end!" warned the Master of Dreamy Hollow.

His eyes blazed as he glared at the man on whom he had showered his trust and esteem.

"To-morrow morning you will return to New York. By the time you reach there I shall have

made up my mind as to your future usefulness to the company."

Having delivered this ultimatum Villard on second thought punched the button for Jerry, a colored servant, long in his employ. He responded at once.

"Send Santzi to me," said he,—"and return with him. I have duties for both of you. Also arouse the housekeeper and tell her to provide tea and toast immediately for a departing guest."

When Santzi, the Japanese body-servant to Drury Villard, presented himself a few moments later he was told to order out the limousine and prepare to accompany Mr. Parkins to New York.

"It is urgent that the trip be made as quickly as possible—but safely," said Villard, and as Santzi started to obey, the master walked along beside him until both were out of hearing of the Parkins suite.

"I want you to sit inside facing this man. He is not well, and should get back into a milder temperature. If he tries to get out of the car just see that he doesn't. His mind is rather upset, because of his illness. Jerry knows where he

lives and will drive him straight to his door by early morning."

"I'll attend, sir," replied Santzi.

"Then come back home, and get some sleep—but don't shut your eyes while Mr. Parkins is in your care!"

"I not sleep, 'ntil start back. Must I use jiu-jitsu?"

"If necessary—but be safe. Do him no real harm. See that he harms neither you nor himself—that's all."

As Parkins, in sulky mood, came out of his comfortable quarters into the great hall leading to the porte cochere, Villard walked along beside him, his hand upon his shoulder. Following came several servants, Santzi in advance, Jerry, Jacques, and Mrs. Bond, the housekeeper, who carried a hamper filled with food. Parkins had refused to partake of anything to eat before leaving and as he stepped inside the car the top light illumined his ashen face. He took the handshake offered by his host who smiled reassuringly and wished him safe journey.

"You'll be down again, soon, I hope," said Villard, his voice kindly. "These cold nights get

on one's nerves until one becomes used to them. Call me up soon, I'll be glad to know that you have recovered. Don't try to report at the office to-morrow. I will phone up that you are not well, but will be in a few days—meanwhile I'll look in on you at your home. I'll let you know when. Keep your mind clear, and don't worry."

Perkins' last peep into Drury Villard's eyes brought each mind into full understanding. Parkins knew that he must not go near the general offices of the Villard Corporation without invitation from Villard himself. Looking the situation squarely in the teeth he cursed the drugs that had crazed him, and at once resolved to carry out orders. His future depended upon his acceptance of the suggestions offered, which, in fact, were orders. So tense were his nerves at the moment he could have cried out against his absurd folly, but the placid face of Santzi appeared as a full moon with eyes ever alert. The best thing to do was to draw the robe about him and snuggle down to sleep.

The next he knew the big limousine had halted before the entrance of the huge apartment building in Park Avenue. There he maintained a suite

of rooms richly furnished and thoroughly equipped for the kind of life he led. Having slept all of the way home he had fairly recovered from his delirium of the night, and after gulping down a full portion of "whiskey sour," he aroused his man-servant and ordered his breakfast.

Then, methodically, he began to repack his suit case, a very large affair with double hand-grips, capable of holding enough clothing for a trip to London. But such a journey was farthest from his thoughts. Patchogue was his destination, and the object of his haste was "the prettiest little country girl on Long Island!" He had promised her a trip to the great city, and her father was to accompany her—"and that makes everything all right," he exclaimed aloud, holding up a kodak picture of a beautiful young woman, plain of dress but graceful of form, and a face of idyllic charm.

"Poor little motherless child," said he, softly —"and what a devilish cur I am growing into!" he growled warningly at his weakness.

Shaking his head soberly as if steadying himself against a great folly, his eye again caught

sight of the big black bottle on the sideboard and he rushed toward it and grasped it with trembling hands. This time he took several great swallows, then rushed to the kitchenette for water which he gulped down his throat until its parched surface had been appeased.

"Poor little country maid," he mumbled after recovering from a spell of hiccoughs which suddenly seized him. "I'll send her old man on a bus ride while I show her a good time along the great white way—and then to Zim's place! Poor little motherless girl—never has been to the big town in all her life—and lives only fifty miles away! The old man can drift for himself, after his bus ride. Ye Gods! Long Island holds thousands of them who never have seen lil' ol' n'york —hic! Poor lil' country baby—I love her—no use to marry, she hasn't any money. Love gets cold when you run out o' gold—sounds like a song-hic!"

Parkins now stripped himself for a bath and was soon out of the tub and under the shower. All this had a sobering effect upon him, and by the time he had shaved and dressed he looked the part of a well groomed gentleman. His eyes

caught glimpses of the big black bottle now and then, but he stood firm, and turned his back upon it. Once he waved his hand toward it and hoarsely whispered—"never again!"

Then suddenly, he threw back his head and laughed immoderately.

"Never again—hell!" said he, "I'll drink when I want to! Whiskey hasn't anything on me! I can take it or leave it alone," saying which, he stepped over to where the bottle stood and took several swallows just to prove his assertion. Then, calling to his servant, he ordered two full quarts placed in his suit case, and to phone McGonigle's garage for his four seated roadster.

A half hour later he was steering his car amid the traffic of the Williamsburg bridge on his way to a little house in the heart of Patchogue, the home of Alexander Barbour, and his daughter —Winifred.

CHAPTER V.

THE HAWK SEEKS ITS PREY

As far back as he could remember, Alexander Barbour had fished for the New York Market in the waters of Great South Bay—likewise his father and grandfather before him. A vast area of fishing ground stood just off Patchogue, then a tiny village, near which flounders were seined in enormous quantities. They were nearest in flavor and delicacy to the famous sole of English waters, and the great restaurants and hotels of the day vied with each other in devising new ways to serve them.

Alexander Barbour, with all of the vim and courage of youth, took the business when his father died and forthwith married the girl of his choice, whose personality and charm made of him a fond and loving husband. His greatest hope was that she might bear him a male child, that the line of succession in the Barbour family should go on through another generation. Un-

happily for him the first born was a girl, and before a week had rolled around the mother died —and Barbour, the fisherman, drooped into a physical and mental decline.

Only a winsome baby girl was left to cheer his lonely heart. He strove hard to conceal his disappointment but the habit of brooding increased, for he had prayed for a son, but alas, his prayers had been denied.

Before her death Mrs. Barbour gave to her babe the name of Winifred, and, as the end drew near, a village parson performed a christening service in the presence of weeping neighbors who pledged loyalty to the mother's memory, and to the welfare of her little one, thus comforting the dying woman as she passed on to another world. From the shock of it all Alexander Barbour shrank into a pitiful state, having failed in his attempts at reinstating his prestige. Finally competitors controlling great storage warehouses and banking facilities drove him practically out of the field. The interest on his savings did not suffice to live upon the liberal basis of past years, and as Patchogue grew in population the name of Barbour receded from public concern.

As a babe in arms little Winifred cooed her way, laughed as a child, and as a school girl finally sang herself into her father's good graces. At ten years of age she had mastered the art of housekeeping, and with a wisdom far beyond her years, encouraged her father, as best she could, to keep up his spirits and not give way to despair.

"I know where you can gather some wild cherries," she volunteered to him one day; "they are just thick along the inlet, and everybody is out picking them for the market. They bring a good price in Patchogue."

By the time Winifred reached her fifteenth birthday she had graduated from high school, and in addition to that had "kept the home fires burning" with a knowledge that surprised her friends. But all through those years under the home roof she had maintained the practice of conversing with her dead mother. This she began in her eighth year, as a child would talk with its doll and answer back as its mother. The habit had continued through girlhood into young womanhood, minus the doll, but at the age of eighteen she made the startling claim to her father that she could converse with her dead

mother at will. While humoring her belief, he nevertheless was skeptical, and shook his head indicating his doubt.

"But there are certain hours of the night, when the great stillness comes on, that I can hear her voice just as plainly as I can hear yours now," said she, quite convincingly. "Why, I talked with mamma last night!" she declared with girlish vehemence.

"What did she say, Winifred?"

Mr. Barbour allowed himself to appear somewhat convinced by her statement. It would do her no real harm, and she would outgrow the vagary of such dreams as she grew older, according to his belief. Then, too, thoughts about her mother were for the good of the girl—an influence that should be encouraged.

"She told me to study hard and become a teacher—and——"

"Yes, dear—and, what?"

"Well, I've been thinking how to tell you—the last message was about you," said she, smiling up into her father's eyes.

"Are you at liberty to tell me?" he asked,

bracing himself against the choking grief which suddenly seized him.

"Yes, indeed—but you mustn't mind her solicitude for your future. She thinks you are aging too rapidly and that you must find a way out of your sorrow. She asked me to give you more companionship, and to lead you into a firm belief of the hereafter. Your lack of sincere belief leaves a gap in the way of your communicating directly with her."

All this was said in a voice of sweet modulation and assuredness, a smile lighting up her face as she spoke. There was no question of her absolute convictions.

"What would you suggest, Winifred?" replied her father, his voice broken, and his eyes filmed with tears.

"I don't know, but mother thinks the waters of South Bay hold the solution. What could she mean by that?"

"I hardly know what to think. Did she suggest any particular reason for that answer?"

"Oh, yes—she said that they would bring you back to the land in time. I am glad I didn't forget that," said Winifred, jubilantly. "Let us

think it out some way. Perhaps she meant that you should keep on fishing and sell your catch to the market men. Afterwards buy a farm with your earnings."

In the conversation that followed Winifred took no small part in calculating a plausible solution to her dead mother's advice. The waters of Great South Bay at once suggested fish, oysters —wild ducks in the fall of the year, and in the early spring. These would sell to local buyers for ready cash. But what of the land? They had none! In her own heart she knew that her mother had meant to arouse her father into physical activity.

"Couldn't we rent some ground?" suggested Winifred—"and send our produce to market by boat from Patchogue? Other people do."

"Indeed we could, my dear child," exclaimed Alexander Barbour, straightening his shoulders. "We will do that very thing, with the city of New York to back us in our enterprise. We can sell all we raise, surely, for there is no vegetable trust to squeeze us out of business, as there is in fish and oysters."

"And when I begin teaching school we will

put my earnings away, too," echoed Winifred—"and, oh, won't mother be glad when I tell her of our plans?"

With that enthusiastic speech she jumped from her chair and wound her arms about her father's neck. The kisses she showered upon him electrified him, and from that moment his resolve to succeed never waned.

And all went well with the Barbours, father and daughter clinging to each other, avoiding all tendencies toward extravagance, so that within the space of a few months they found themselves in more comfortable circumstances. Throughout the next two years "messages from mother" inspired them and cheered their way, and all of a sudden the village of Patchogue began to grow by leaps and bounds. Substantial hotels sprang up, subdivisions were platted, cottages and villas builded up on every side. Taking advantage of "the boom" the Barbours bought lots and sold them at a profit, and Barbour himself built a refreshment booth on the Merrick Road near the beach, and Winifred helped in its management. No longer could she devote her time to household duties, for sales at

the booth dropped off when she was away, whereupon a housekeeper was selected and put in charge of the home. Winifred's bright face and unfailing humor had worked wonders financially. People came back to the stand from time to time, mostly automobilists, who always seemed to know where the best could be had, and—never mind the price! One of Winifred's most persistent and profitable customers, Mr. William Parkins of New York, had expressed the same thought in another way.

"We want what we want and we get it," said he, with a jolly laugh, at the young girl in charge. "Better look out, little sister, or some one will come along and steal you!"—and that was the first effrontery Winifred had ever experienced.

Abashed she turned her attention to other customers, but the heightened color in her cheeks showed her indignation. Nevertheless Parkins stood around, picking out this box of candy, and that bag of salted almonds, to say nothing of homemade pies and cakes, each to be wrapped separately, thus to gain her attention as many times as possible.

"I need these out at my fishing hut over on

the ocean side," said he smiling into her eyes, but they were cold. "Don't be angry," he pleaded. "I had no intention of being rude—I apologize most sincerely."

Parkins' voice was so kindly and his smile so winning that Winifred's face relaxed into its natural sweetness of expression. But she said nothing and found things to do which kept her busy. Parkins, gay New Yorker, with money galore, was not of the kind who accepted defeat. Here was a dainty little maid and he wanted to know her.

"I'll stay here until you tell me I'm forgiven," he persisted. "Why, little woman, I am the last man on earth to suspect of willful rudeness. I'd rather jump in the bay, and say to myself 'here goes nothing,' than to offend you. Honor bright! Now do please say it's all settled, so I won't go away feeling ashamed of myself."

Unused to familiarity from strangers Winifred remained silent for a time in order to think out the best plan to pursue. She wished her father had been there, then the incident would not have occurred. But he was absent—therefore the necessity of taking care of herself.

"No further apology is necessary, sir," she found herself saying. "I presume you live in New York, and your ways are different from our ways. Our men folk are always respectful to women, and we very naturally cling to the amenities even though we are country folk."

"Of course you do!" exclaimed Parkins, "and that is the right course, always—but this is the holiday end of a busy week of hard grind, and my outing has been so delightful I just feel friendly to everybody. Do you live here?"

"I was born here, and have always lived here. For three generations my people have been settled in this locality," she concluded, as customers were crowding her stand; but when the rush was over she found, to her surprise, that the man she had upbraided still remained.

"I have been coming to Patchogue for several years but I never saw you until to-day. I thought you might be one of the new crowd. The place is having a sort of boom period, lots of new home builders, and all that. Hard work, standing up all day, isn't it?" he suggested, with a little touch of sympathy in his voice.

"Not very, sir—my father relieves me several

times during each day, and if there is anything going on at night, he attends to the stand."

"Good money in this business while the season is on, I imagine," persisted Parkins, by way of keeping the conversation going. "Strange I have never seen you until to-day," he reiterated.

"We are new in this business. Heretofore our family has been in the fishing industry. And latterly, truck farming also. We still ship some vegetables to New York by boat, and sometimes by express. But we are practically out of that business now."

"I suppose you run over to New York once in a while," he smiled.

"No, the farthest trip we've made was to Riverhead, and it's beautiful! Such a pretty park —and a tremendous court house! But we've never been off of the Island, none of us—except mother, who was born in Connecticut."

Parkins, a man of quick discernment, caught a sad expression in the eyes of the girl behind the counter of "The Goody Shop," so named on a neat little sign hinged to the eaves of the sheltering overhang.

"I suppose your mother stays at home and

takes care of the family?" he suggested, enquiringly.

"Mother is dead," replied the girl, calmly, a far-away expression in her eyes, as she glanced at the sky. "She died when I was a baby."

Now was Parkins' chance to impress the girl with his "sympathetic" nature. He sighed deeply, and for several moments looked at the ground and said nothing. When, finally, he did speak there was pathos in his voice.

"My mother died when I was a child in arms. I have no memory of her whatever, but her photograph seems to speak to me at times," said he, dreamily.

"I talk to my mother every night," replied Winifred, happily. "She sends messages through me to my father, and tells me what to do for him. He isn't very strong, but that comes from grief over her death. Now he is much better. It was such a long time before she could reach us," she confided, artlessly.

And so began the acquaintance of a man of the world and a country lass, the man halting between two emotions. In determining the course of his further acquaintance with the sweet

little maid the best bargain he could make with himself was—"I'll think it over." So, with perfect decorum, and bowing and scraping he bade the young woman good-by, adding the hope that all was square between them—since his apology. He reached out his hand as a final test of his theory that he "had won out with her," and was delighted when she accepted his overture politely. He bowed most courteously as he sprang into his wonderful new roadster and plunged forward along the asphalt road. For miles Winifred could hear the roar of its exploding cylinders, as, with mufflers "cut out," the car raced along to his fishing hut on the ocean side of the bay.

"I'll be back to-morrow," he had said on leaving, but she only smiled in reply, for "to-morrow" would be Sunday, and her duties were elsewhere —at church and Sunday school—where she taught a class—and then home to a noon dinner with her father.

As time went on Parkins' week-end excursions increased, and various were the cars he used. A big black mahogany limousine and a two-seated roadster, with rakish hood and brass trim-

mings that glistened like gold, were his favorites.

He never failed to call at "The Goody Shop," and after an acquaintance of several weeks with Winifred she accepted an invitation for a spin along the outer drive which she had never seen. Her father, now well acquainted with the wealthy New Yorker, esteemed him a gentleman, and consented to ner going. When she returned with face aglow, and with enthusiastic praise for the skill of the owner of the car, her father patted her cheeks and smiled. He was glad of her happiness and his trust in Parkins became absolute.

As the season advanced, with profits large, Alexander Barbour expressed his opinion to the effect that to buy direct from New York wholesalers would save him much in the way of extra earnings upon his capital. Buying from salesmen gave him no chance to bargain. They sold from printed lists, but by going to New York he could make selections and find right places to trade.

"I'll take you over any time you want to go," said Parkins, affably—"and Miss Winifred, too, if she so desires."

"Oh, I do so want to go, Father!—say that I may, won't you dear?" she pleaded, putting her arms about his neck.

"But who will take care of the stand?" he queried. "We can't close it up for two days. Our friends will think we have quit, and we'll lose trade!"

"Oh, I can manage that beautifully," pleaded Winifred. "One of the girls in my Sunday school class, Julie Hayes—you know her, father—she can be taught in an hour just what to do."

"By all means allow her to come along," seconded Parkins, and his appeal seemed to settle the matter.

Winifred was to wear her new blue silk coat suit, and a retrimmed hat that had been retired, despite the fact that Parkins suggested—"we never put on our best when we ride in a touring car."

But to Winifred the trip was more than an outing, for her father had some business to attend to, and happily, there would be plenty of time to see the "greatest little town in the world," as Parkins called his New York.

And so the date was set, and as fate often

decides, it fell upon the second day following Parkins' ride from Dreamy Hollow, under the watchful eye of Santzi—Japanese body-servant to Drury Villard. Had his plans gone through, Villard, by now, would have been an inmate of a certain Long Island asylum, whose proprietor Parkins well knew, but in his jaded condition, he decided to run his car straight out to his hut and thereby thoroughly refresh himself for the excursion to New York—planned for the following day.

His inner consciousness troubled him more than he could account for, man of the world that he was, whose morals had long since hardened against the scruples of his younger days.

CHAPTER VI.

SECRET SERVICE

UNDER fire Drury Villard always appeared to great advantage. He knew nothing of defeat. His life work had been a succession of victories, and among his acquaintances there were those who credited his achievements to luck. As a young man he came very near having imposed upon him the sobriquet "Lucky" Villard—but he frowned upon it until his intimates felt the unwisdom of that sort of familiarity. Parkins alone of the directory continued the practice long after the business had grown into vast importance and the Villard name had become known all over the world. While credited with being the brains and motive power of the huge concern Drury Villard had never allowed any one to say it to his face without protest on his own part. Said he—

"If I've done anything particularly well it is to have surrounded myself with clever men of

brains and honesty. With that foundation the rock of Gibraltar had nothing on us, except age and advertisement. The latter we supplied in a measure suitable to our needs—but youth must be served. We must now revitalize or inevitably fall before the young college trained men now running the country."

Always modest, never oversanguine, self-reliant and honest to the core, were attributes upon which to build a happy old age free from care and strife. One of Villard's beliefs was that God never intended everything to run smoothly —"all of the time." Reactions were necessary. Foundations, no matter how solid in the beginning, must be looked after, and kept solid. Nothing should be left to chance.

And so it was on going back to bed, after Parkins' departure, that his mind reverted to the affairs of his company. On these his thoughts concentrated. He wondered if he had exhibited the right policy in turning its management over to his co-partners. Not if the Parkins' case was an example of further consequences. That was his thought. He wondered if others in the organization were susceptible to non-loyal utterances

concerning himself and his paramount interests. The best way to get at the facts was to "look in on the boys every little while"—and that was about the last worry he indulged in preparatory to going to sleep. Then suddenly he felt the nearness of his loved one, and breathing softly he awaited her sweet voice. At last it came, in the form of a whisper, seemingly very close to his ear, but strangely difficult to locate.

"Drury—again I warn you. The man you sent away must never enter your life again. Dishonesty is fastened upon him. Attend at once. There is folly in waiting."

Villard, though startled, lay quite still. Then, after a long pause, he answered—

"Yes, Winifred—but for you I should have been taken unaware. Your warning gave me time to formulate a plan of action."

"Drury, my darling—you shall not live alone. You must marry a kindred spirit, a woman upon whom you may lavish the love that was mine. It is your nature to revere womankind."

"But what of my love for you, my Winifred —I——"

"And it is myself, *incarnate,* that you would marry," interrupted the invisible Spirit.

"How shall I know?" he faltered, overwhelmed at the suggestion.

"You will meet her—soon."

"Yes, yes—go on!"—he whispered hoarsely, but he waited in vain. The spirit of his dead love had gone back to its resting place among the stars.

Drury Villard accepted the theory that when a man is forty he is in the prime of life, and after that his physical powers wane. Nevertheless there were those who, by obedience to nature's laws, remained young at sixty. He knew that every five years a normal brain and a normal body become attuned to the next five-year period, and upon this theory Villard, now emerging into his forty-seventh year, had planned his activities. By virtue of his early training he had worked hard in working hours, and played hard during the daylight overlapping. Thus was served his grand physique and his growing brain, each getting its share of natural restoration.

During his first years in business his effort had been prodigious. Just out of college he had

plunged into a new enterprise, the child of his own brain. Unique, and head and shoulders above those whom he drew about him—from a mental and physical standpoint—his leadership never was questioned. Each new acquisition to his organization was picked by virtue of his seemingly unerring knowledge of men. As he brought in a new recruit, that person had only to make good in order to become a "special partner." Under the contract with each man his continuance with the company hinged upon the will of Villard, and by common consent his fiat was law.

Of all the men chosen, Parkins, the brightest of the lot, had been the one man to flunk. Now, secretly, Villard was on his way to New York for the one purpose of bringing him back to the fold. Driving directly to the apartment in Park Avenue, where Parkins maintained his living quarters, he was informed that the gentleman had gone away. The superintendent was not quite sure that he had a right to give out information concerning his tenants. When asked as to when Mr. Parkins would probably return he declined to give an opinion.

"But where did he go?" demanded Villard.

"I do not know. He left no address," was the reply.

"Then tell me what you do know. When did he leave? Did he move his effects?"

"He left soon after he returned here in the early morning. His furnishings are all here—and he left a check for next month's rent. That's all I know."

"Are you in full charge here?" inquired Villard, peering wistfully in the eyes of the man before him.

"Yes," replied the agent, shortly.

"Tell me then, in what condition was he when he arrived—and when he went away."

"Very angry on his arrival—very much upset on going away. I thought he might have taken something for his nerves."

"Did he speak to you on leaving?"

"Yes, I came in as he was leaving. He gave his check for rent to the exchange girl—to be handed to me. I got it all right. And that's all I know."

"And your name, please?—'Bender?'—thank you, Mr. Bender. I may wish to speak with you again. My name is Villard, a very close friend

of Mr. Parkins, and I have business matters requiring his presence at my office. If he shows up, kindly ring my phone—Private, one hundred. It will be to his advantage, I assure you."

Villard was soon within his own office and nervously pacing the floor. With his hands behind him he twiddled his thumbs and gave way to deep thought.

"Parkins must be saved!" he said to himself, and quickening his stride, he rushed out of his private office into the counting room.

"Ring my chauffeur," said he, seeing and speaking to no one in particular, then returned to his office. Shortly afterward his car was announced and he was soon headed for the Wall Street district.

At the Updyke Detective Agency, twentieth floor of the Universal Exchange, he asked for Updyke personally and was ushered in. The two shook hands cordially and at once got down to business.

"Do you know William Parkins—one of my special partners?" questioned Villard.

"I'd say I do—what's up?"

"I can't find him."

"Where have you looked?"

"Called at his apartment—he'd gone from there, leaving a check for a month's rent!" replied Villard.

"When?"

"Early this morning—left no word—but paid the month's rent in advance—which was unusual."

"Um—any reason to be anxious about him?"

"I'll give you the whole story."

Then, careful as to details, Drury Villard recited the facts briefly and wound up by declaring that he was "bent on saving Parkins from any untoward act that might lead to his downfall —financially, morally or physically."

"That's a big order to take down," replied Updyke, laconically.

"Why?"

"Do you assume to know Bill Parkins from hat to shoes? Do you know that he is speculating upward on a downward market? Do you know that he is a drunkard, that he takes dope, patronizes low places, and is a disgrace to your high class concern?"

Villard, aghast, stood up and walked to and

fro, across the room. Finally he turned and said—

"He must be saved!"

"Saved! Saved Hell! Why, man alive, he is beyond redemption!" yelled Updyke, whose forcefulness caused Villard to eye him critically. Evidently there were matters concerning his Vice President of which he was unaware.

"How long has he been beyond redemption?" questioned Villard in an even tone of voice striving to conceal the alarm within him as best he could.

"I'll look up his record," replied Updyke, ringing a bell and ordering out a certain page from a loose-leaf book of records. As he placed it in Villard's hands, he glanced at it to make sure it was the right document.

"Here we have his travelogue for five years back," said Updyke, airily. "It began with a gay party in which he was accused of short changing a fifty dollar bill that he was asked to break. There was a resort to blows, in which Parkins got licked and owned up to his dishonesty. Read his whole record—here it is—take it."

Villard did take it, and as he read along his eyes filmed until tears ran down his cheeks and fell upon the page containing the record. Then suddenly he threw it upon Updyke's table in disgust.

"Why didn't you inform me?" demanded Villard in tremulous voice. "I'm your client—am I not?"

"You are, Mr. Villard, but—I thought I could save him without prejudicing his outlook with you. I got soft hearted—same as you are at this minute; and I got a worse dose, and more of it for my trouble. I tried my utmost to show him that you were the best man in shoe leather, and would forgive anybody, anything, any time. But there is a breaking point that will not stand repair, and Parkins had gone through the crevice. Don't try to save that man, Mr. Villard. He is not worth the tarnish that he will spread upon your good name. Send me his 'walking papers' and I'll see that he gets them. Make it brief—no accusations, giving him a chance to sue you for damages in large amount. He's tricky, and crazy. Get rid of him! Stay rid of him! He is a bad actor!"

Updyke was telling the truth, as Villard, having read the report, was now convinced.

"What shall I say? What can I say? The report from your files leaves me helpless in defense of my most efficient partner. Surely the report cannot be wrong? I've never had one from you that was the least bit out of line with the facts. What shall I say to him if I conclude to communicate with him?"

"Better write me a note, stating that Mr. Parkins has not been about the office with regularity, and that you fear he lacks interest in the affairs of the company. Send me the cash for all you owe him, and a receipt for him to sign, made out in full legal wording to the effect that it is a final settlement—and that his services are no longer needed. If he owns any stock in your concern, and he does, unless he has hocked it, send me a check to cover its full market value, and I will buy it back, and turn it over to you."

Villard sighed deeply as he agreed to the plan.

"I did so want to save this man, but I've been warned before, from a sacred source, to have done with him forever," said he wearily.

"What do you mean by 'sacred source'?"

"Oh, I must not go into that!" replied Villard sharply.

"I get you—some of that 'Over the River Jordan' stuff. I get you," laughed Updyke.

"Just what are you hinting at, Mr. Updyke?" Villard's voice trembled as he spoke.

"Now, Drury Villard! Don't you know by this time that an up-to-date agency like this has a page on every business man worth while, as well as the worthless? Let me show you your sheet. Wait, I'll get a leaf out of a different book—here it is and you may read it yourself. Skip the biographical—that shows you to be first class, but you've recently given cause for alarm. Read Article Seven. Read it aloud, and comment as you will. We're friends, and you might need me as a witness some day."

Glancing quizzically at Updyke, Villard began to read the report—

"Article 7—Drury Villard has recently developed an obsession of mind regarding the future estate. He has long grieved over the death of a sweetheart who passed away some years ago and at this writing he suffers under the delusion of hearing her voice. On retiring from active

duty in connection with the Villard Corporation, he was very generous in his treatment of his special partners. He allowed them to buy stock at a very low price, and later on, is to let them have more, if they succeed with the business. Villard still owns a three-fourths holding but all partners were treated alike and are well satisfied with the deal. William Parkins is also Vice-President, but the office of President has been abolished, Drury Villard becoming Chairman of the Board. He now lives in a retired way in Long Island on his private estate which he has named 'Dreamy Hollow.' His fiancé, now dead, given name, 'Winifred'—surname unknown. His nearest neighbor (Sawyer), a retired doctor, lives on adjoining estate, said to be very wealthy."

"Now what miserable cur could have written all of that rot!" exclaimed Villard.

"Point out all that is in error and I'll change the report. We must keep up our records," said Updyke, sharply, with a wave of his hand. "There isn't a chance in the world that this record will be observed by any one not connected with our

office. I give nothing out on death notices, or biographies."

"Then for what purpose?" demanded Villard.

"Oh, if you became a crook, or went crazy, we would be queried by certain interests. We ask no favors. This business is mine. I made it what it is, and it's worth a million as it stands. If I was crooked I could say it's worth a hundred million."

"God—what a power you hold! In case of your death, what a cruel use could be made of those leaves from your records! What a chance for certain slimy little blackmailing publications!"

"My body will be cremated, and with it my books of record. That's part of my will. Now I'm going to ease your mind—you have the page containing the facts about you. It is the only copy on earth. The notes from which it was made up have been destroyed. If you desire I will destroy the page in your presence, right now," proffered Updyke.

Villard was astonished at the proposal.

"I wouldn't care one way or the other, if it wasn't for——"

"Yes, I know," responded Updyke, "you're thinking of the dead. You don't want her name bandied about."

"That's it—I am thinking of her—to memory dear. It's good of you, Updyke. Downright generous! But why do you propose it without my asking?"

Villard began to pace the floor.

"Sit down, please," said Updyke gently, as he twisted his watch chain, and cleared his throat of a great lump of hesitancy. "I once had a sweetheart, Mr. Villard, and she went away, too —somewhere up in the skies, just like your Winifred. And like you I have never married. I cannot spare the memory of her—I'll die single!"

Every doubt of Updyke's genuine friendliness was now discarded by Drury Villard, as his eyes lighted with reciprocal understanding.

"Wonderful, old fellow! Let us find joy in the fact that we have both loved, and both of us have been loved. Now we will burn this record. That shall be the seal of our lasting friendship."

Villard's eyes spoke for his heart.

"Here, take it—burn it yourself, Drury. I shall call you by your first name hereafter."

Turning upon his heel, Henry Updyke walked to a window and looked down twenty stories upon the great metropolis, its streets agog with people and traffic. When he heard the click of the latch on the door, he turned about. Villard had gone. It was no longer necessary for Updyke to hide his emotion.

But there were things to be done immediately. Parkins must be found and delivered to Villard. Updyke pressed a button and immediately one of his operatives entered and approached his desk.

"Here's a name on this card—I want this man brought to me as soon as possible—by all means before night. Do you know him?"

"Very well by sight. I've looked him up before—don't you remember?"

"Oh, yes—the Peabody case. While drunk Parkins hit him over the head with a champagne bottle—yep—you brought Parkins in. It is a shame we didn't send him over at that time but he begged me to straighten him out and see that he reported for business next morning. I did it—and did it more than once since then. But

this will probably be the last time we'll need hunt for him. His boss has something on him that will bring him to time—I hope. Parkins is a bad egg, so watch out for him, especially if he is in his cups. Now go to it—bring him to me if you have to give him a teaser."

For four hours Updyke sat in his chair, or paced the floor, awaiting word from his operative. He smoked incessantly while reading the evening papers and at six thirty o'clock ordered ham and eggs, and coffee. These had been set before him when the night telephone gong gave three loud clangs. That meant Updyke himself —in a hurry. He sprang to the receiver and in a quiet unruffled voice answered, "Shoot."

"Number twelve speaking—your party dashed through Patchogue about eleven this morning and was last seen going east at high speed. Lost trace until just a few minutes ago. Find that he has a fishing hut across South Bay on the ocean side. He's bound to come back this way —the question is, when?"

"Where are you now?"

"Patchogue."

"What do you advise?"

"Well, I have my motorcycle, and I feel certain he will come back this way. If I went over on the ocean side I might have sand trouble. He has four wheels and a ninety horse roadster. I think I'd better stay here," concluded "Number Twelve."

"I believe you are right," replied Updyke. "How about the Sayville road? He might, for a change, cut across and run in by way of the sound. I think I'll put two other men out on this, you to carry out your plan, one to watch the Merrick road, the other on the detour along the sound."

"That might be wise although it seems certain he will come back this way. What shall I do when I locate him?"

"Serve a 'John Doe' on him and bring him to my office, otherwise trail him to the jumping-off place—in other words, get him!"

"By the way, there is a fine looking girl at Patchogue who runs a stand. I wonder how it would do to feel her out about him," queried the operative.

"You bet your boots—that's a Parkins lead as sure as you live, even if it does turn out bad."

"Then I'd better run back there before she closes up for the day. She's a humdinger to look at," said "Number Twelve" with enthusiasm.

"Well, see that she doesn't get your goat. Keep your head on your shoulders and don't be led into any girl trap. Get me at my hotel after seven, through my private wire—'Updyke'—Will be here until six-thirty—So long."

CHAPTER VII.

THE NEW WINIFRED

WHEN "Number 12" reached Patchogue "The Goody Shop" was on the point of being closed. The girl in charge, and a man she called "father," were instructing a young woman how to run the stand for the next two days. They had all but put up the night shutters as the operative climbed off of his machine.

"Any sandwiches left?" he enquired, racing to the stand.

"Oh, yes—a few nice ones, and some very fine blueberry pie," replied the older girl as smilingly she displayed several huge wedges of assorted pies. "And here's a lovely slice of lemon meringue, the last one left," she urged, and at a nod from her customer, handed it to him on a pasteboard plate, together with a dainty paper napkin.

As the operative put his plate upon the sill of the stand and began to eat, the two girls and

"father" continued their conversation about a grand ride over to New York next day. Listening in on the conversation he learned which girl was going on the trip—her friend called her Winifred—and when she spoke to the man she addressed him as Mr. Barbour.

"I wish you were going along, Julie," said the girl Winifred, very much delighted. Then she said—"Mr. Parkins is taking us in his big four-passenger roadster—how many horse powers has it, father? It must be a lot—something like several hundred I would think from the noise it makes sometimes."

"No, it's a ninety," corrected her father who seemed proud of his better knowledge.

"What time do you leave for New York?" enquired the girl, Julie.

"Mr. Parkins is to pick us up at the house at ten to-morrow morning. And then, away we go!—just whizzing along Merrick Road so we can see all of the beautiful homes along the Bay —and the Sound coming back! My, but he drives fearfully fast! I expect to be frozen with fright by the time we arrive in the city."

Having fallen into all of the information he

could have wished for, "Number 12" suddenly quit on his second wedge of pie and asked which was the best hotel nearby. "Roadside Inn" was pointed out just across the street, and rolling his motorcycle beside him he walked over and went inside.

Once in his room "Number 12" got busy. Looking at his watch he concluded that Updyke would be at his hotel, but that was up to Central. "Updyke" was all he needed to say and in less than a minute he had his man.

"All right, shoot," came the regular answer by which "the big boss" announced himself—"Number 12?" he queried.

"Yep—got the whole works. Am at Patchogue, Roadside Inn, phone Patchogue—twenty. The father rather old and solemn, neither ever saw New York before, and never off of the island. Has a pie stand on the parkway—darn good pies too."

"Soft enough, I'd say," replied Updyke. "Shall I run a man out to you to-night?"

"Why not come out yourself—if it's an important case?"

"No—if he gets away from you I'll nab him

here. He's up to his regular tricks—the scoundrel!—now don't you fail to nail that fellow!" warned Updyke, to whom the whole situation was as plain as daylight from darkness. "Trail him and keep me posted on the route he has taken. No doubt he'll cross on the Queensborough bridge."

Running true to form the Parkins roadster roared its way into Patchogue next morning, and the operative quietly registered on his tab —"one brandy and soda at Roadside Inn." Immediately afterward Parkins jumped into his car and ran slowly two streets west and turned north one block. The Updyke man did not have to leave his chair on the porch of the hotel in order to witness the movements of the big car. There was a hasty carrying out of two suitcases, and a hamper probably containing luncheon. Then the big car turned back to the south on the Merrick Road and proceeded west at a lively clip.

Shortly thereafter, "Number 12" trailed in at a safe distance behind, and it was with much skill that he kept the roadster in view, but never in a way to attract Parkins' notice. The girl

sat in front, and by the way she turned her head and indicated pretty homes to her father it was evident that her mind was carefree.

Not knowing the inside history of the case, the perative rode stolidly along behind. Coming to a roadhouse in one of the villages he stopped and phoned Updyke, all done in less than three minutes—then he crowded on the gas until he came in sight of the party. Almost at once he lost them again by reason of sharp turns in the road, but all was well, and he had no fear of losing them, for miles ahead there was no other road to turn into.

Three minutes later he came upon a sight that made his blood run cold. There, around the curve, in a hollow just ahead, were two cars overturned and smashed beyond repair!

Strange are the ways of Providence.

There are times when coincidence and circumstances blend into episodes for which there is no accounting—an act of God—in terms of legal phrasing. As Parkins' car took a curve in the road at high speed going west, Drury Villard and his neighbor, Dr. Sawyer—out for a leis-

urely spin with Santzi at the wheel—were on the same road heading east.

The day was especially fine, and with top down the Villard car sped along the concrete road without a jolt or a jar. Sawyer, in a most excellent mood, was inclined to speak jokingly of the Parkins episode at Dreamy Hollow two days previously. But to all of his sallies Villard failed to answer in kind. Certain "messages" were on his mind, and along with them a mixture of joy and sorrow combined. Could another Winifred answer the call of his yearning? Could his heart go out to any other than the Winifred of old? He doubted it, but he owed it to his dead love to await certain events, since she had urged the duty upon him.

So absorbed was he in contemplating the situation that he was quite unprepared for the sudden application of the emergency brakes. His car was rounding a curve at a healthy speed when suddenly Santzi pulled up short, just in time to avoid the wreckage of two monster machines overturned in collision. Each had been smashed into a veritable mass, and the silence of the scene served to accentuate the gruesome

aspect of the otherwise beautiful surroundings. Suddenly a tall man with hair of iron gray staggered to his feet and shouted—"Winifred!"

"Winifred!" echoed Villard, jumping from his car. In a second more Sawyer, hastening to alight, called upon Santzi to rush along for a doctor, and to notify the motor police.

Villard, who stood spellbound on hearing the name he adored, soon forced himself into action. Instantly the words that were whispered to him in the early morning hours came to mind. "It is myself, incarnate, that you will marry—You will meet her soon—There will be an accident—You will give assistance."

He saw a man, hatless and bleeding, rushing madly about calling the name Winifred. Villard again took up the cry.

"Winifred!—Winifred!" he shouted, running from point to point amid the wreckage.

His search was soon successful.

Of several persons strewn about the roadside he knew instinctively, when he had stooped over the form of the one he sought. He dropped to his knees and seized her hands, chafing them vigorously to renew suspended animation. He

placed his hand upon her brow, and raised an eyelid—then bent over and put his ear to her heart.

"Winifred," he whispered softly. "Wake up, dear child!"

Then jumping to his feet he shouted to her father:

"Here she is, sir—and she's coming back to life! Water, Sawyer—find a thermos bottle! There must be one somewhere in the wreckage."

To Villard all else in the world was naught but this beautiful child woman whose head and body rested against his breast. As if paralyzed her father looked on, mute and despairing.

"Splash some on her cheeks," he commanded of Sawyer, who hastened forward with the bottle from one of the upturned cars.

"More—more—ah—that's the stuff—water! See? She is breathing again, and I doubt that she is very much injured. We'll soon know," he said to himself as he began, ever so gently, to raise her arms, and nether limbs one by one. Then he laid her, full length, upon the grass, and pillowed her head with his motor coat.

"She doesn't cry out—no bones broken—thank God!—just bruised, and shocked by the impact

of the fall," he explained to the dazed father with quiet gentleness. "Get some cushions out of the wreck and we'll make her comfortable under the shade of a tree."

Almost immediately a man on a motorcycle dashed upon the scene and with difficulty stopped in time. Throwing his machine to one side he ran quickly to the big roadster—"Number 12" had literally run his man to earth. There lay the inanimate form of William Parkins with the pallor of death upon his face, and a bleeding wound well back of his left ear near the occipital bone. His body was pinned beneath his heavy roadster.

"The man is alive—give me a hand!" shouted "Number 12" to Barbour, who, still dazed, had fallen to his knees in prayer for his daughter's life. But, he made no answer, thereupon Sawyer responded as best he could for a man of his age. It was more than a one-man job to raise the tonneau of the big machine in order to allow Sawyer to drag the limp body from beneath the wreck.

A retired doctor himself he knew how to man-

age the situation better than the man who still called for his girl.

"I know this fellow," said Sawyer, breathing hard from his effort in helping to release the unconscious man under the roadster.

"Who is he?" demanded the motorcycle man, incredulous.

"His name is Parkins, unless I am greatly mistaken," replied Sawyer, still puzzled, but practically sure.

"You're right," agreed the man who had been trailing the victim for nearly an hour. "He is a bad actor, and it was my intention to arrest him on the New York side of Williamsburg bridge. I'd hate to have him croak before my boss sees him," he concluded, and then fell to his knees and began the work of bringing Parkins back to life.

"What is he wanted for?" asked Sawyer, after several moments of hesitation.

"I'll have to refer you to my boss as to that. I was told to get him, and it's up to me to find a way to deliver him. You can bet that he is going to have a long dry spell after the old man gets through with him," sneered the operative

as he looked upon the limp figure now stretched out upon the grassy roadside.

"Whom do you mean by 'old man'?" enquired Sawyer.

"My boss—and what he doesn't know about people! Well, what's the use to speculate? I had a hard time keeping Parkins in sight. Forty to sixty miles was his gait. Pretty fast for a narrow concrete roadbed."

Parkins now began to breathe heavily, and moan. Anxious that Villard should be apprised concerning him, Sawyer walked hastily over to where he sat, still holding the girl's wrist and counting the pulsations.

"The man we took from under the big car is William Parkins," said he, laconically. "He will live—probably."

Drury Villard looked up in amazement.

"You don't mean it!" he exclaimed.

"Yes—it's Parkins—still Vice President of your company!"

Sawyer looked steadily into Villard's upturned eyes, and shook his head ominously. "Bad news to get into the papers, Drury. What do you suggest?"

Receiving no answer Sawyer stood thoughtfully stroking his chin until his mind had settled the matter.

"I will take Parkins into my home until we can think out a plan of action," he said, finally. "You take the girl and her father into your home for the present. Then there will be no chance for news to leak. Mrs. Bond will look out for her."

"How about the doctor?" replied Villard, thoughtfully. "He might——"

"Doctors are like lawyers; they serve well those who pay well—especially when the public interest is better served thereby."

"First-class reasoning, friend Sawyer. Our plan is made. When Santzi returns we'll take both patients and the girl's father into my car and race for home. What about the other machine—any one hurt?"

"No, just a colored chauffeur returning with an empty car from the city. He jumped in time to save himself and is now waiting for some one to take the wreck to the nearest garage. It is pretty well smashed, but the boy is unscathed."

With plans all mapped out they were quickly

put into execution. Upon the return of Santzi with Doctor Benton, who followed in his runabout, the medical man at once put his ear to the girl's heart—then, to make sure, used his stethoscope.

"We'll get her over to Dreamy Hollow at once," said he, glancing at Villard, who nodded affirmatively. "Her heart is beating strong enough, but she must not see this wreck when she comes out of her present state. Put her into your car at once, while I take a look at the man lying on the grass. Who is the old fellow over there praying?" he inquired sharply.

"The girl's father," replied Sawyer, shaking his head sadly. His sympathy was genuine.

"I'll take him in with me," volunteered Doctor Benton, but Villard objected as he wanted to talk with the father of the girl.

Under orders Santzi drove back to Dreamy Hollow without a bump against his tires. During the short time occupied by the trip the father of the girl gave his name as Alexander Barbour, of Patchogue, and also stated that his daughter Winifred was his only child. Her mother, long since dead, left her, a tiny new-born

babe, to remind him of her own dear self. Without the child, he might easily have gone crazy from grief and loneliness, but little Winifred had steadied him every step of his way by her sweetness of disposition and her loving consideration.

"I dread the time when the right man comes for her," he sighed. "Now, she is mine, but some day her mate will call and she will go to him."

Alexander Barbour was deeply moved by the thought of the sad fate in store for himself.

"But that should not worry you," said Villard. "Make a bargain with the man she marries that you are privileged to live near by and may visit your daughter as often as you desire. No decent husband would deny that right," he concluded, smiling into the father's eyes.

"I'll be glad if it turns out that way—usually it doesn't. But in any event I should miss her sadly. She hears from her mother every little while."

"What!"

Drury Villard could hardly realize that this u

conscious little child-woman possessed such powers.

"Yes, her mother tells her what to do, and gives her messages from others to be delivered to earthly friends. She got word through her mother last night from some one by the name of Winifred. She is reticent on the subject, but I know that she regards the advice as sacred."

Running his fingers through his hair nervously, Barbour admitted that her power was, to him, a great mystery, but as to the revelations he remained silent, as if in awe concerning them.

Twenty minutes later Mrs. Bond, the housekeeper at Dreamy Hollow, stood speechless at the porte-cochère as she beheld her master alighting from his car with a woman in his arms. Amazed, the good lady reached out as if to take the fair burden from him, but Villard demurred. He had held her in his arms during the ride and he would risk no accidental stumble on the stairway. Turning to Santzi he ordered him in a low voice to drive Dr. Sawyer to his home, and to help him with Parkins until the doctor arrived.

"He's coming on behind us and will be here any

moment. He will go to Dr. Sawyer's as soon as he gets through here," added Villard.

So saying, the master of Dreamy Hollow, with careful step mounted the grand stairway leading to the second floor. Mrs. Bond had rushed on ahead to the "hospital" suite, so-called, because of its equipment for emergencies and its wonderful outlook over South Bay, with its miles of magnificent gardens. Ever so gently he laid his fair burden upon the bed prepared for her and after gazing into her beautiful face, turned and left the room. As he approached the head of the stairway he met Doctor Benton coming up, and with him, Mr. Barbour, whose face still showed the agony of his mind. To him Villard said—

"Don't go in—she is being put to bed by Mrs. Bond. We'll wait in the room next door, until the doctor gets through. This room you will occupy until all is well with your daughter," he concluded as he smiled into the troubled face of the anxious father.

Doctor Benton, after a brief examination, arose from his chair beside the patient, a broad smile lighting up his face.

"No medicine, plenty of fresh air, water if she asks for it. I'll be back in an hour. I must get to that man Parkins. He is bad off, and may not get through," said he, hastening away.

At once Mrs. Bond went to the room occupied by the father of the girl and beckoned Villard into the hall. As he appeared she motioned him to follow her into the room where Winifred had been tenderly placed on a downy bed, and a coverlet thrown about her.

"She's all tucked in and looks like an angel," she whispered, tip-toeing up to the bedside, with Villard closely following. "Isn't she the sweetest thing you ever saw?—the doctor left no medicine—says she's all right!"

Villard stood silent for more than a minute before replying, but it was evident that he yearned for the speedy recovery of the charming creature.

"I wish she would open her eyes—I've never seen them yet, although I held her in my arms for ten minutes," he replied, whimsically—and strange to say Winifred's eyes did open—bright as diamonds they were, but with no sense of rec-

ollection until she had gazed upon the face of Drury Villard.

At once a vague expression of happiness came over her fair features, but faintly smiling and with eyes closed, she went back to sleep.

Villard, now buoyant, grasped Mrs. Bond's arm and led her out of the room. When they were safely out of hearing he stopped abruptly and looked into her face.

"Did you observe that she recognized me?" he asked eagerly.

"I did," replied Mrs. Bond. "It gave me a start, for I felt that neither of you had seen each other before to-day."

"That's true—we have not met before. But how may we account for the fact, that after she looked into each of our faces, mine was the one she thought she knew?"

"I give it up, unless she was directed by that Divinity which shapes our destinies," replied the housekeeper, with much feeling.

Hastening to Barbour's room he opened the door without formality and found his guest upon his knees in silent prayer. Touched at the sight he went forward and knelt beside him, placing a

hand upon his shoulder. Then he whispered into his ear—

"She is safe—the doctor says so—your prayer has been answered even as you made your wishes known. You should look upon her sweet face—come with me," appealed Villard as he helped the grief-stricken father to his feet and escorted him to the bedside where his child, with a smile on her lips, still slept. But the fact that she lived was enough joy for Alexander Barbour.

CHAPTER VIII.

HENRY UPDYKE DROPS IN

WONDERING what might be going on at Sawyer's home, Villard went into his study and gave him a ring over the phone. Sawyer personally answered the call. Evidently the episode of the morning had been trying, for his voice was gruff —much deeper than usual.

"Who calls?" he demanded in a rasping tone.

"Villard speaking—I have been wondering how matters stood over your way. All serene over here. The girl has opened her eyes, but immediately went back to sleep."

"I'm glad to hear that—over here the situation is terrible! This man Parkins is a ruffian —at death's door his oaths are blasphemous, and to those who are trying to save his worthless life he shouts defiance and demands his revolver that he may 'kill the whole bunch'—to use his words, expurgated. His language toward Doctor Benton was vile!"

"Well, well—that must be stopped! Wouldn't it be safe to move him to a sanitarium—or something?"

"Yes—an asylum for insane drunkards—that's what you meant to say—wasn't it?"

"Approximately that—why not drop over for a while and we will have a chat? You can count on me—you know that. I'm awfully sorry that you're mixed up in this, but when you come to know the girl you'll forgive everything."

"I'll do that now, and I will be right over," said Sawyer, slamming the receiver back in its place in pure spite against the upheavals of the day.

It was well along toward evening before Dr. Sawyer took leave of Villard's happy hospitality. He had even been invited to take a peep at the beautiful Winifred Barbour, who still slept, but would soon be normal—according to the doctor whose second call had brought complete assurance to the household. But the ever recurring subject between them was William Parkins. What should be done with him? More than once Villard showed signs of irresolution regarding him. Perhaps if he were sent to one of the

far-off branches—Cape Town, for instance—but Sawyer threw up his hands and shouted "Pish—tush!"

"Why man alive—he would kill the business of all your foreign connections. Asylum!—put him in a place where he may reflect at his leisure—and, say!—here's an idea—send for Henry Updyke!" exclaimed Sawyer, banging the arm of his chair.

Without a word Villard stepped into the booth and rang up his man—promptly making connection.

"I wish you'd run down here, Henry," said he, "I have a problem to solve."

"You bet you have—same old problem—Parkins!"

"Of course you would know all about our trouble," laughed Villard. "You surely have a nose for news."

"Yep—Parkins is at Sawyer's pretty well smashed, but still keeping his eyes open. We are watching the place—night and day shift from now on—but we've got nothing on him. You can't jail a man for a smash-up unless it was by

premeditated defiance of the speed laws. And you'd have to prove it. How is the girl?"

"Resting easily—Benton says she'll come through all right."

"Wonderful girl—eh? I've seen her off and on since she was a little child. I've known the father quite well—a dull sort, but easy to extract information from—if he has any. If he ever had any he didn't know it—just gave it up by way of general conversation. I guess I'll run down after a while, probably be at your house about eight—that gives you time for your dinner."

"Bless you, yes—come down at once and break bread with me—I'll wait."

"No—can't leave now—see you to-night at eight—have Sawyer there if you can."

"He's here now—I'll have him dine with us. He's pretty well broken up over the day—but—my boy!—it has been a great day for me!—can't talk now—good-bye!"

Turning to his friend Sawyer, Villard again appealed to him to stay for dinner, but his neighbor felt that that day had worn him out. Bed was the place for him, as early as possible, after his dinner. He urged that Updyke be coaxed to

stay over night, and take a look at Parkins. Dreading the presence of the man in his home he stood in need of courage, and Villard agreed to hold Updyke if such a thing were possible.

Promptly at eight the big fellow rode into the driveway at Dreamy Hollow, accompanied by two men, a chauffeur and an operative. Having been expected, Villard himself met Updyke at the porte-cochère along with the servant. Santzi hovered near, but was not obsequious. When the guest had alighted, he jumped upon the running board and showed his man the way to the garage. It had been a glorious day for Santzi as he had served his employer well, which made him very happy. When the car was garaged he led the way to his small kitchenette and served the two men a Japanese dinner.

Meanwhile the big mansion showed no lights, Villard and Updyke having gone into consultation in Villard's office. Big men that they were, each eyed the other solemnly, and then, simultaneously they broke out with a hearty laugh—and that relieved the tension.

"Life is a great experience," said Villard, his

big open face radiating his good humor—"one little thing right after another."

"And the more we laugh the more we live," replied Updyke, lighting his usual black cigar.

"A big day for me, Henry!" exclaimed the host; "a great day indeed!"

"Yep—little Winifred—your luck is phenomenal, old fellow. I congratulate you with all my heart."

"But suppose she wakes up and asks for Parkins?" queried Villard, anxiously.

"I had thought of that, and my hope is that something else will occur. But that very thing might happen. Better be prepared for it," said Updyke, his face denoting his serious thought on that subject.

"Please particularize, Henry. What precedent have you to offer?"

Villard's interest was from the depths of his heart and the uncertainty of the girl's attitude on awakening was already forming a dread in his mind.

"I gauge my thoughts on what has gone before in numerous cases. Consider yourself in my car seated in front beside me. I'm loaded with booze

but it is inside of me, so I do not catch the odor of it myself. But you, who have never touched liquor, catch a whiff of it, and instantly your suspicion is aroused to the fact that I'm a drinking man."

"But there are——"

"Yes, I know there are moderate drinkers, but girls brought up carefully, as Winifred has been, have nevertheless come to know the terrorism of old John Barleycorn. She lives near a great artery of automobile traffic. Most of it perfectly respectable, but some of it vile and besotted. She reads the Riverhead paper probably, and a magazine of some sort, appealing to her feminine viewpoint. In other words, now that she is a business woman, her vision has enlarged, and not a day goes by that she does not witness something that reminds her that she is opposed to drunkards. But she is sorry for them, nevertheless. Given her choice, she surely would not associate with a man who drinks."

"Undoubtedly Parkins had been drinking. Dr. Benton admitted as much to me," volunteered Villard. "The odor was still on his breath."

"Yes, but Winifred may not have sensed it, for

Parkins uses the old fashioned eau de cologne on his lips, eyebrows, handkerchief, and his hair always smells of pomade and tonic. A country girl might easily believe that perfume used by a fascinating fellow like Parkins was quite the thing, but no girl would sit beside a man who drove into a curve at a fifty or sixty mile gait without sensing danger—would she?"

"I dare say no sophisticated girl would—probably no girl, sophisticated or otherwise, would fail of being apprehensive," agreed Villard.

"Very well—now comes the point you originated. You asked me to guess what she will say when she comes to her senses. She will not say what you think she will. The last thing she thought about just as the cars collided will be the thoughts she will wake up with."

"Sounds logical," agreed Villard.

"Statistics prove it in hundreds of cases. As her senses left her she felt a shock akin to death," said Updyke, soberly. "And as she went into what looked to be certain death she must have wondered if Parkins was insane. It was all so sudden, her thoughts may not have been

entirely formulated, but even in the zone of coma the brain functions in a weird sort of way, incomprehensible to the victim, but remembered afterward—if the victim survives."

"Doctor Benton thinks a little soft music from the organ might be helpful in bringing her out of her present state. Under your theory it might not help," said Villard. "Would you experiment?"

"Surely I would," exclaimed Updyke, "but I'd soft pedal at the start. As I understand the situation she hasn't opened her eyes since the accident, therefore I would go slow in startling her sensibilities for the present."

"I'm going to make a confession, Henry, but don't say anything to the doctor about it when he comes in shortly. My housekeeper and I stood by her bedside and she was so beautiful I said to Mrs. Bond, 'I wish she would open her eyes'—I hadn't seen them, you know, although I had held her in my arms for awhile just after the accident—and all the way home. Well, believe it or not, I'll be switched if the little creature didn't do it—and by jinks—she seemed to recognize me!"

Updyke was plainly at a loss to account for the recognition.

"Very strange, indeed," he conceded as he gave Villard a sharp look. "Sure you didn't have a little brain trouble when you saw those bright eyes?" laughed Updyke. "I can't account for her recognition of a person whom she had never seen or heard of before."

"Nevertheless, what I say is bona fide, as Mrs. Bond will attest. She saw the girl's eyes open, and the look of recognition—and more, the girl smiled at me, and went back to sleep. Now, old sleuth, 'what do you make of that'?—as Sherlock used to say."

"Well, let's see if we can figure it out," replied Updyke soberly. "Why, it's perfectly plain—the message from your dead sweetheart, and the father running around calling his girl by name. My operative phoned me the circumstances. He saw and heard everything."

"You are right—as usual. I'll have to buy a medal for you, but for the present I am going to ask you to look at her. Sometimes a man of your experience may have intuitions that doctors may not have. Benton was here on his sec-

ond visit just before you came, and is coming back again to-night. Parkins is in very bad shape, so he is giving a larger share of attention to him. He feels sure of Winifred's recovery and is not uneasy about her. Now you come with me and tell me what you think after you've studied her face."

"Lead the way," said Updyke as they ascended the stairway.

The night nurse had arrived, and she came to the door, as the two men looked into the sick room. She glanced up inquiringly.

"I am Mr. Villard and this is Mr. Updyke—a specialist in his way. I want him to look at the patient."

"Come in please," invited the nurse. "She is still asleep and I've kept the night lights on in order that she shall not wake up in too much darkness.

"Has she opened her eyes since you came on duty?" asked Updyke.

"No—only once has she opened them I'm told, and then only to close them again," was the reply. "That happened earlier in the day. Her father was in several times, and it was pitiful

the way he prayed for her life. I just couldn't help crying."

Updyke went over to the bedside and bent over the white face, scrutinizing it carefully. For nearly a minute he peered steadily at the eyelids until finally his patience was rewarded—they twitched! Noting the fact, he put his mouth close to her ear and whispered as softly as his voice would carry—"Winifred," he breathed—and the eyelids fluttered.

"Wonderful!" whispered the nurse, but Updyke raised his hand indicating his desire for complete silence.

"It's time to wake up little girl—your father wants his breakfast and the booth must be opened—it's going to be a busy day."

Updyke's voice, gentle at first, was almost natural in tone at the finish. A perceptible movement of the hand and lips indicated that her condition was not so serious as Villard had feared, and his solemn face became radiant—but immediately afterward, glum, when Updyke said:

"That's all for the present—she'll wake up

naturally bye and bye. It's dangerous to force the issue."

A servant bearing a message suddenly took both men out of the sick room—"Mr. Updyke is wanted on the phone."

An operative had some important news for him.

"Have put Parkins' valet through a sweat bath —got everything he knew. 'Number Nine' was with me and took down the whole story. Shall I shoot it?"

"Shoot" replied Updyke, winking at Villard. Then to the latter he said: "He is going to give me the confession of Parkins' valet—and the valet is one of my men."—"Go, ahead—I am listening," said he, as he removed his hand from the mouthpiece.

"Here goes," said the operative—"Parkins, drinking heavily as he got himself ready for a run over to Long Island licked up two-thirds of a quart of straight whisky while he shaved, bathed, and dressed. Had been brought home in Villard's limousine guarded by a Jap. Though jaded he didn't try to sleep, but began to change his clothes, and talked to himself in a maudlin

way. The valet said he continually referred to a poor little motherless girl—who evidently lived on Long Island. He was to bring the girl and her father to New York—neither had ever been to the city—although lifelong residents of Long Island. Parkins talked of sending 'the old man,' meaning the father, on a bus ride to the end of the line and back, probably for the purpose of losing him. The girl was to stay with Parkins and be shown the town, the big stores—tall buildings and so on, with a probable wind up at dinner at some shady joint. While Parkins had not actually unfolded his intentions toward her, the inference was that he would see that she took something that would put her out for a time. Nothing indicated as to the father after the ride on the bus—sequence would naturally suggest that he would be allowed to drift. What do you make of it?"

"The plan seems plausible up to the word 'sequence,' replied Updyke. "Parkins was known to the girl's father, who trusted him. He could not afford to let the old man drift for he knew Parkins by name, and would naturally make inquiries. Parkins could not have risked that.

More likely he would take the girl to a sporty restaurant, and order a private dining room. If possible he would slip something into the coffee, or whatever he got her to drink. Parkins is a damnable villain, and, thank God! we got him before he had a chance to succeed!"

Updyke, whose wrath took on new vigor, fairly snorted as he sensed the real story.

"I've got a 'John Doe' on the valet," replied the operative. "Fifteen is in charge of him, here in the office. What shall I do with him?" asked Number Twelve.

"Just hold him over night in one of the rooms —it might be risky to jail him. Make him feel at home, and that he is doing us a great favor, for which he won't lose anything—see? Better put a man in the entrance hall, next to his room."

"I got you—good night," said the operative.

"Good night, Twelve. You've done a big stunt. See you to-morrow afternoon or evening," replied the chief, turning to Villard with a broad grin on his face.

Not wishing to further upset Villard's mind, he said that the information was second-hand,

therefore he would reserve it for the present. Parkins being in such a serious condition the case might be settled through his death. Meanwhile, bad off as he was, he should be "watched like a hawk," and any attempt at escape should be balked at all hazards. The evidence of the valet was conclusive, but always there loomed the chance of newspaper notoriety. Therefore, the necessity of great care.

"Now we'll make a call on Parkins," suggested Updyke, to which Villard agreed, although the doctor was overdue. A last call for the night on Winifred had been agreed upon, but evidently the case over at Sawyer's home was too critical—perhaps an operation had been necessary.

On reaching the Sawyer home Updyke and Villard were informed that the host had retired, but that Doctor Benton and a surgeon from New York had experimented upon Parkins, and were awaiting results which might call for a more dangerous operation in the region of the brain. One of the two nurses had volunteered the information. The situation was grave.

"I'd rather he died than come out of it a

cripple for life," said Villard, as they strolled back to Dreamy Hollow in a roundabout way.

"Don't worry as to that—he will pull through, and the more crippled he is the more dangerous he will become," said Updyke. "He will steal the girl one of these days if you are not everlastingly on the alert."

From that thought Villard, who saw the truth in the prophecy, became silent, as a new fear seized his heart. By every means in his power he would frustrate such an eventuality, and with his last drop of blood he would stand between the girl and the evil genius whose touch would defile, and whose snares would destroy. Updyke, "mind reader" that he was, had just grounds for planting the seed of everlasting vigilance in Villard's brain.

"There is an old saying that 'it takes a rogue to catch a rogue,' Drury, and I've spent years in acquiring a rogue's viewpoint. Just make up your mind that Parkins can never assume the rôle of a saint, except as a subterfuge, and that every hour that he isn't asleep, he is dangerous."

"I place the whole matter in your hands, Henry. I have not the wits for the job, and

would probably lose in any fight against any man with the mind of a crook," replied Villard.

The worries of the day had been great and rest was important in view of the duties of tomorrow. A peep into Winifred's suite found the nurse in good cheer. The sleep of the patient was more normal, and signs of a desire to awaken had been noted. All was well, as the two men took their separate ways to comfortable beds and a well-earned rest.

CHAPTER IX.

FORCES BEYOND THE SKIES

GLOOMY days followed along the path of Drury Villard during the week succeeding his last interview with Updyke. The invalid upstairs was in bed, devoid of memory. She laughed, talked, sat up in bed, or in a perambulating chair was taken out among the flowers and trees each day. She recognized no one by name, not even her father, whose health was giving away under the strain. Her talk was of flowers and birds by day—and the stars by night.

"I'm going to be with them soon," said she, gaily—referring to the stars. "My mother is up there."

"And where is your father?" asked Villard, trying to aid her memory.

"I don't know—I'm expecting him any time," she answered eagerly, and Mr. Barbour, standing near and in plain sight, turned about sadly and walked away. His child no longer knew him.

Upon this situation, he brooded in silence. He felt himself an interloper upon the hospitality of a man he did not know. But Villard, far-seeing and well disposed, invited him to stay on and gave him courage to do so.

"My home is your home," said he. "Some day she will come into complete recollection—and then, if my hopes are fulfilled, we shall become man and wife."

"God speed the day!" exclaimed Alexander Barbour fervently. "Everything is being done for her. You have placed us under great obligations."

But Villard would not have it that way.

"The good fortune is all mine," said he, emphatically—"and I have reason to believe that she will become my wife, even if I am some years her senior. There are forces beyond the skies that are working out my salvation, and that of your daughter. I won't go into the matter further than to say that I am sure the fates are on our side. When all is settled, you, who are creeping on in age, may call my home your own. You may come and go at will—no one will oppose

your coming or your going. You will be a unit unto yourself."

Villard was never cheerful when showered with thanks. When the older man tried to express his gratitude the master of Dreamy Hollow simply smiled and waved his hand. A few minutes later he stood on the sands of his private beach and watched the waves as they swirled and pounded on the shore line. His thoughts, however, were far away, but the very faith he put behind them turned them into messages to his dead. But he anticipated no word in reply. His own reasoning counseled him that the *new* Winifred had released the *old* from further strenuous effort in his behalf.

"It is myself incarnate, you will marry"—she had told him. Then—"You will meet her soon."

And it had all come about just as *she* said, and now she could rest forevermore in peace—the darling of his early love! Her effort at self-effacement, were it possible to erase herself from his memory, had been sublime, but to her reincarnated soul he would hinge his destiny through the instrumentality of Winifred Barbour. She had now become the Winifred of his earlier devo-

tion, and he would lavish his love as a true man should—but there would be no relaxation of his loyalty to the memory of the dear one gone before.

"I shall always revere your memory," he had whispered hoarsely. "The new Winifred will never attempt to obscure your likeness from my heart. Together you will entwine my soul and become as one great love. Farewell beloved. Go to thy rest!"

As Villard spoke he bared his head and stood quite still. Then, as he walked his way back he quickened his pace, but halted abruptly as Alexander Barbour came running toward him.

"She's all right again—her mind has been suddenly restored!" he shouted.

"The Lord be praised!" shouted Villard with a glad light in his eyes. Resuming his rapid gait, he left Barbour puffing along, behind.

"And she has asked for 'Drury'—and insists upon seeing him," panted Barbour. "How could she know of you? I tell you, sir, it's very strange! She has always lived in one place. She knows nothing of your helpfulness in rescuing her from the wreck. All she realizes is that

there was a collision and that she has waked up in a palace. She seems not to know that her memory has been lost since the accident."

"When did this change take place—and where?" demanded Villard, soberly.

"She was in the hammock on the west veranda —and had dozed off after playing like a little child among the flowers."

Villard stood quite still for a few moments and looked up into the skies. Then turning toward Barbour he said:

"A miracle has taken place before our very eyes. It would be sacrilege to even try to fathom such mystery. But we will never cease to thank that Wonderful Spirit which has helped your daughter into a normal condition. Come let us hurry along!" he commanded of the mystified father, after the fashion of those born to rule.

A moment more and Drury Villard stood looking down into the eyes of the lovely creature whom God had sent to him—"to have and to hold, until death do us part."

"Do you know me, little woman?" he asked tenderly.

"Yes, you're Mr. Drury!"

"Right—but when you awoke from your lapse of memory you asked for 'Drury'—and that is my given name," said he, his eyes twinkling.

"Now isn't that strange, sir? I had never heard that name until just a few moments ago. Of course, I must have dreamed it. What has happened to me, and my father? I remember I was in a dreadful accident—did you know that? It occurred this morning—where am I now? It seems like Heaven!" said she, smiling up into Villard's face.

Their eyes met, but after a searching glance, the new Winifred withdrew her beautiful gray-blue orbs from the contest and gazed out upon the gardens where gay flowers bloomed and flitting birds winged their way from tree to tree.

"And you are sure that you have quite recovered?" he asked, solicitously, wondering whether or not he should tell her of the real lapse of the time since in his arms he had borne her to his home.

"Oh, entirely so, and I feel so grateful, and so fortunate. I am sorry indeed to be wearing borrowed clothing. The dress I wore this morning was perfectly new—the first time I had worn

it. We were going to the big city and I was so happy. I have never visited New York, but I'm satisfied with this dreamland—only it will be hard to come back to earth, all in one short day."

Drury Villard smiled at the thought, and releasing her hand he drew up a great lounging settee which afforded him a seat beside her.

"Perhaps I should tell you something about the accident," said he, looking into her eyes for consent.

"Oh, do—please! I've been wondering—I seem to be in another world," said she, dreamily.

"To begin with, you have been here several days, much to our delight," he replied, watching the effect of his words.

"Indeed!" she exclaimed, blushing with embarrassment; "think of all the trouble I've caused!"

"But we haven't been troubled in the least, and we have grown to think of you as our own," said Villard. "I have asked your father to live with us—we are so lonesome in this big house. I love the place, but at times it is so dreary that I lose myself in grief."

The eyes of the new Winifred opened wide in sympathy.

"You must have had a deep sorrow," said she, in a low voice.

"Indeed that is true, but I think I know a road to happiness," he replied, tenderly. "When you grow stronger I will tell you what I mean. But there is something I want to know at once—how did you guess my name?"

"Oh—now I remember! I have heard your name—my mother sent me word. She talks to me quite often."

"Your mother is dead, is she not?" queried Villard.

"Yes, on earth, but now she *lives* in Heaven!" replied the girl, simply. "Winifred told her to tell me that there would be an accident and that Drury would aid—and—and——"

"Oh, please go on, dear girl, and what? Tell me about this second message."

Villard's great strength of character proved his mastery over the young woman, who, awed by his commanding voice, had no power to refuse his request.

"But it's all so sacred!" she protested. "Yet,

if you insist, I feel that I must. Don't think it unwomanly, will you?" she pleaded.

"Never—I promise you that, on my sacred honor!" replied Villard, fervently.

Then came the story that he had awaited so eagerly—a story not for those who would doubt, or laugh to scorn, but for those who believe in a life to come—the life everlasting. Tears gathered in Winifred's eyes as she began to speak.

"My mother came to me Monday night," said she, tremulously. "I was ready to retire at an early hour because of my great happiness concerning my first trip to the big city. I had knelt to say my prayers, when suddenly I heard my mother's voice. Although I have had frequent visits from her I never actually see her. Her voice, which I so dearly love, came into the room and called to me by name, but I could not locate the direction from whence it came. So I bowed my head again, and waited. Shortly she spoke, saying—'There will be an accident, my child, but no real harm will come to you—be not afraid. Tell Drury that his Winifred wants him to marry the person whom he saves from death.' That was all, and of course you are the Mr. Drury, and if

you were instrumental in saving a woman from death, your Winifred wants you to marry her."

Villard struggled with his emotions after Winifred Barbour had bared the great secret he so longed to unravel, while she, in sympathy, buried her face in her hands and sobbed. Villard's mood was so like her own that he dared not try to comfort her. He had no words with which to soothe, nor power to check the sorrow and joy that mingled within his own bosom. He simply stood by, resolutely restraining his emotion, until he had mastered it—then walked away until the new Winifred had composed herself.

On his return he lifted her into his arms and kissed her cheeks and lips, and beautiful dark brown hair.

"You are my Winifred, now," he whispered, hoarsely. "God has willed it so—and your dear mother in Heaven has sanctioned it. My dead Winifred is yourself, incarnate. I shall keep and guard you during all of my remaining days on earth. You will become mistress of Dreamy Hollow, and we will share all blessings as long as we each shall live."

Taken by storm, Winifred's eyes opened wide

in astonishment, but she made no answer. If in her secret heart she had ever thought of a marriage proposal, it was not of the kind that had just been spoken. But Villard was a law unto himself and he took Winifred's hand into his own, and together they strolled along the wooded path leading toward the ever wonderful beach. This path was seldom used because of its density of foliage and the low hung branches of the trees and bushes. At last they came upon the sands where the waters pounded and the roar of the sea beyond the bar spoke messages from far away lands.

And there they halted, each mind in deep contemplation of the other, while gazing far out where the blue sky and the waters of the deep merged with the shadows of a waning day. As yet the answer had not been spoken, but the love of the man was fast winning the heart of the girl. The verdict seemed not far away.

CHAPTER X.

THE NURSE TAKES A CHANCE

PARKINS' escape from death owed itself to a surgeon's skill, the operation upon his head having been successful. Now he sat up in bed, after seven days at the Sawyer home. He talked very little, but the furtive roving of his eyes during his wakeful hours denoted his mental activity. Aside from the injuries to his head, all harmful results had disappeared. The wound on his scalp was rapidly closing up, and according to the surgeon, would never be noticed, owing to the dense growth of his hair. Roached back and parted nearer the middle, the wound would be obscured. According to both doctors, another week would find him strong enough to walk about the grounds, but Parkins secretly knew that he had plenty strength with which to escape. He had no way of knowing Villard's views concerning him, but he was aware that Updyke only visited places where something unusual was going on.

He could feel without seeing the Villard satellites—minions of the law!—they were unremitting. So far as they could prevent there would be no chance for his escape.

One thing Parkins had done well. He had made a fast friend of his day nurse. By degrees he had won her confidence, until finally he asked her if she would not prefer a good salary as his housekeeper rather than slave on as a nurse.

"I'd go mad with such work on my hands," said he. "Only the faithfulness of kind-hearted women toward those who suffer makes life worth living. How much do you average per week?" he inquired abruptly.

"Oh, it's hard to tell, all owing to circumstances. In order to get anything like steady work I have to take what the doctors offer. Some weeks I scarcely make anything—other weeks twenty-five dollars, and sometimes fifty. Last year my weekly average was a little over twenty dollars. I could hardly make ends meet," she concluded.

"Well, I should think as much!" exclaimed Parkins, with a frown at the ways of humanity. "How would you like to become housekeeper for

me at fifty dollars a week, with all you can eat, and a Christmas present for good measure?"

"Are you married?" she asked as if doubtful upon that point.

"No, not yet, but I'm soon to be married—and to the sweetest little lady in the land. We would have been married now but for the accident. We were on our way to New York, eloping, as a matter of fact, although her father was along. We were going to surprise him by suddenly going to The Little Church Around the Corner, and with him as a witness, have the ceremony performed. He would have been delighted," said Parkins, with enthusiasm.

"Surely he would—and a lovely surprise, indeed!" replied the nurse, gaily. "Was she hurt very badly?"

"No, just shocked, I gather from listening to the doctors. She's out and around, and the place she is stopping is beautiful—just look out of that west window into those grounds. See the big white mansion through the opening? Well, the man that owns that home is many times a millionaire, and I am Vice President of the company in which he made all his money."

"You don't say!" exclaimed the nurse.

"Yes, he is the one who picked us up after the wreck—he and Mr. Sawyer were out for a drive. Villard took the girl to his home and I was brought here. The doctor said it would be best not to have two invalided people in the same house."

"Well, that's a fact, especially when they are so close to one another," replied the nurse, thoughtfully. "But it won't be long before you will be ready to go your way. Of course you will take the little sweetheart along."

"Your last cent can go on that," replied Parkins. "But we're going to fool them, just the same, as soon as I can get out of this—and I'm almost ready now. We are going to elope, and this time her father will be none the wiser until it's all over. He is pretty much broken up over the accident, but the home he is in is a dream, so he'll be happy there until we come back for him—See? He knows I'm rich, and that I have a big standing in the business world."

"How will you manage so grave a matter as an elopement?" inquired the nurse, soberly.

"I'll think it out—oh, now that you are going

to be our housekeeper, and all that, you can help us easily, and no one will ever know it," concluded the patient, his face lighting up as if inspired.

Parkins knew how to smile, and to appear the soul of honor. The nurse, Mrs. Duke by name, as given to him by Dr. Benton when he introduced her, at once approved him.

"I might be helpful, and would be willing to aid, but I wouldn't want to be left here to be blamed for it," said she soberly.

"Why, that's easy to avoid," said Parkins. "During your daily exercise, manage to meet her, and get acquainted. But don't tell her of our plans, because she is a nervous little soul and might see difficulties in the way. Naturally she'd want her father along, but that would spoil the elopement," said the patient, with a sly wink.

"I see that clearly, but what about me? I——"

"I was just going to tell you what to do. First, get acquainted with her, and on a certain day I'll have a car waiting at a certain place near by. As you walk along with her you could suggest a pretty place you'd like to have her see. When she arrives there the car will be waiting, and you

and my sweetheart will jump in, and away you'll go. Meanwhile, as the car passes this place I will be where I can jump in and become manager of the affair."

"I'm so afraid of anything like that!" exclaimed Mrs. Duke. "We might be arrested."

"Oh, pshaw! Nothing of the kind. She's of age—she loves me—and we are going to be married! The only thing I'm afraid of is that the old bachelor who owns the place where she is now might want to marry her, and she is so sweet and obliging, her father might coax her into marriage with this man Villard," explained Parkins.

"Villard! Is that his place?" asked the nurse, sharply as she again looked out upon the beautiful home.

"Yes, it's worth a couple of millions, including the land and beach property," replied the patient.

"Why, he was the man over here last night, was he not?"

"That was Drury Villard. You saw how friendly he was with me, and how concerned he was about my condition, and everything."

"Yes, indeed, a fine looking man—but too old for that sweet little girl," said the nurse, shaking

her head in deprecation of even the thought of such a match. "He may be a nice man, and all that, and seems kindly, but an old man's love is no love at all, so I'm going to help the girl to escape such a fate," she concluded, shaking her head as though she meant it.

"And if you do, I'll give you one thousand dollars in cash!" whispered Parkins, as the nurse looked into his eyes.

They held true, disclosing not the least appearance of deceit. Whereupon Mrs. Duke nodded her head affirmatively.

"I'll do it," she said, "and if you don't mind, I am going out for a little fresh air"—all of which was accompanied by a knowing smile—the smile of a skillful accomplice.

To Mrs. Duke a millionaire was a living crime. Want, perpetually barking at her heels, gave her no charity of feeling toward the rich man—his kith or his kin. She likened such men to a huge net stretched across the river of life to which human souls were drawn unerringly by man-made currents, until caught in the meshes and held in despair. Naught but death could come to their rescue.

To her, the knowledge that a man of William Parkins' goodness of heart could be accounted a chattel of the great Villard was unthinkable. As she walked along among rare trees and flowered bushes her heart turned cold and her eyes dilated indignation at the inequality of human destinies. Had she but known the man, his kindly nature, his open purse, and great benefactions, her hatred of Drury Villard would have been turned into admiration. Good woman that she was, her intuition had failed her in her estimate of Parkins' veracity. She had yet to learn the depravity of the man, who, by the mere use of five magic words—"one thousand dollars in cash"—had won her hatred toward the best friend he ever had.

So far as Mrs. Duke was concerned it was easy to meet up with Winifred Barbour. The girl loved to look upon the waters of the bay, and during her convalescing days she sat for hours on the sands of the beach and breathed the ozone borne in upon the breezes from the great Atlantic. She had wondered about Parkins, still bedfast, but no inkling had come to her ears of his perfidious intentions toward herself. No gentleman

of Villard's high ideals would have failed to shield the innocent young woman from a knowledge of the perfidy of the man—but the nurse had not been taken into account.

Mrs. Duke instinctively knew Winifred at first glance. There she was seated upon the sands, gracefully poised and tossing pebbles into the waves.

"Why, bless me!—aren't you Winifred Barbour of Patchogue?" inquired Mrs. Duke, smiling down upon the girl.

"Yes, that is my name, and Patchogue is my home. Won't you sit down and listen to the roaring tide coming in? I adore the splashing of the waves! I do not remember meeting you before," she added, as if in apology.

"Indeed, I will sit down—it is such a charming spot. You would hardly remember me, for I left Patchogue years ago, when you were a very sweet little girl. I begin to recall your features. I am Mrs. Duke."

"Do you live in this vicinity, Mrs. Duke?" asked Winifred, politely.

"No, indeed, sorry as I am to say it. I'm too poor for that—I am at Mr. Sawyer's at present,"

said she, as if it didn't matter particularly where she was.

"Oh, indeed! Some one ill there?"

"Yes, but improving very fast. It's a man, thank goodness—a brave man, too. I seem to prefer to nurse a man, for they are so much more patient than women. Not so delicate, you know, and they have more fortitude. But I must confess I've nursed women, too, who were remarkable!" exclaimed Mrs. Duke. "Do you live hereabouts?" she asked in a naïve sort of way.

"No, I still live in Patchogue," replied Winifred, dreamily. "It is so beautiful here, almost like heaven. I wonder if one could always be happy with every craving of the heart entirely satisfied?"

"Positively not, unless the right man is at hand. The man I'm nursing now is such a gentleman! Oh, dear—a week or so, and away he goes to his home of plenty, while I go back to my poor little tenement. Rents are so awful, aren't they?"

"We have never rented—father and mother always owned a little home, and since she died, we've continued to live there. I love the little

place!" said Winifred, looking far out beyond the bay.

"Of course you do, my dear child," purred Mrs. Duke, arising to go back to her charge. "I hope I'll meet you here to-morrow, Miss Barbour, when I come out for my airing. It's desperately trying to have no one to talk to."

"Thank you, Mrs. Duke, I'll try to be on hand," was Winifred's reply, as the nurse sighed and arose to go.

"That's a dear—you can't imagine the dreariness of a life like mine," sighed the nurse, turning to go.

On hearing Mrs. Duke's story, Parkins' mind fairly sizzled with plans. It was a case of now or never so far as Winifred was concerned. He figured that no matter how much she might be frightened at the plans he had in mind, that she would calm down, once she saw how much he really cared for her—and the risk he took to save her from the fate of becoming the bride of a man so many years her senior.

"Youth for the young—age cannot hold out against it," he soliloquized. "Now for a plan of action," said he, in lowered voice, to Mrs. Duke.

"Take these memorandums, please," he whispered, reaching under the top mattress. "Read them carefully, and by all means live up to them. Go to your room and lock yourself in while you memorize each item of the plan. Now is the time—quick!" he whispered, his eyes afire with suppressed excitement.

Mrs. Duke was amazed at the skill of her patient. She read the pages thrice over, each time in a whispered monotone, her lips moving rapidly. The instructions read:

1. During your afternoon walk, go to telephone booth in Murray's Wayside Lunch Room—half a mile east, on the opposite side of the Motor Parkway.

2. Call up Daniel McGonigle's—Murray Hill 10011—be sure that you talk to Dan—no one else—tell him who you are, and whom you represent. Also tell him about the accident.

3. Read him the note addressed to him.

4. If he seems uncertain tell him its $500 if successful; $250 if we lose.

5. He is to have a high-power limousine at the beach end of the private road on the east hedge line of the Sawyer home—to-morrow morn-

ing at eleven sharp—with instructions to take on two women—if not there to wait one hour—then go home. You will be the other woman.

6. The driver to be accompanied by a uniformed assistant who will sit beside him unless you need him inside—if there is a struggle.

7. You will meet the girl at the beach on your morning walk, same as to-day. If she doesn't show up within an hour—come back.

8. If she comes, suggest a walk, east along the beach—for fine view of wonderful gardens—not to be seen in any other way.

9. My room faces right for full observation—I will be in readiness to escape, and will be at the Parkway corner by the time the car arrives. If I fail, go on without me to Herman's—the chauffeur will know.

10. Reassure the girl—soothe her—tell her of my great love—and don't forget the $1000 you will receive—if successful!

Thus was disclosed to Mrs. Duke the processes of the Parkins' mind, and—"Wonderful!"—that was her thought as she tucked the instructions in the bosom of her dress. She gloried in the part she was to take in defeating the purpose of the

rich Villard—and later on—when taking her fresh air ramble she walked into the booth at Murray's and telephoned McGonigal.

At first he refused the job, but finally relented upon the grounds of old friendship. The price was too low for the job, even if it turned out to be a mere elopement. He very much doubted that version, for he knew Parkins too well. But Mrs. Duke succeeded in every way and arrived back in the sick room with triumphant eyes and a thumping heart.

"You have served me well!" said Parkins, patting the hand she laid on his forehead in search of fever.

There was none, whereat her eyes beamed with delight.

"To-morrow," he continued, "is a fateful day for both of us. It means joy or sorrow. I'm putting all of the 'eggs in one basket'—we must win or die! Villard is not asleep! Neither is Updyke! They think I'm too ill to try anything—so we will show them a thing or two."

"I'll help you against that money shark to my dying breath," replied the nurse, her eyes envenomed with hatred for such as he. "The girl

is yours—you saw her first, and no doubt she loves you. I'll see that you get her, too!" whispered the nurse with emphasis.

And so it came about that on the following day, around the hour of eleven, Parkins looked out upon Great South Bay from a window in a servant's chamber of Dr. Sawyer's home and what he saw thrilled him to the marrow of his bones. There they were, two women, easily recognizable, strolling leisurely along the shore line, stopping now and then to admire the beauty of the landscape. A closed car stood off a hundred yards or so at the foot of the east line road. One last sweep of his eyes and Parkins ran to his room and tore off the bath robe and pajamas, thus displaying the fact that he was all dressed and ready for action.

One hour later the Sawyer telephone rang and Villard's excited voice shouted for the master, who came forward forthwith.

"This is Villard, Dr. Sawyer. Have you seen Winifred?"

The voice, while familiar, hardly matched that of the owner of Dreamy Hollow.

"Not since yesterday—what is the matter? Anything wrong?"

"She's missing—can't be found on the premises—searched everywhere—all hands joining. We are simply groping in a blind alley. She walked over toward the beach about ten o'clock, according to Jerry, but that is the last thing known of her. He thinks the Parkins' nurse went over that way a few minutes afterward. Go up in his room, please, and see if the nurse has returned."

Villard's voice was husky and impatient, but when Sawyer returned and reported that neither Parkins nor nurse was to be found, and that a bath robe lay on the floor—also sleeping garments—his voice roared with anger.

"Where is Updyke's man?" he shouted, stifling the ominous forebodings that were boring in upon his brain.

"I'll see—hold the wire—and keep steady. Calm yourself, I'll be back in a minute," said Sawyer.

It was a long drawn-out minute, but the situation was clear. Updyke's operative had looked in on Parkins at ten minutes of eleven. The

nurse was out for a walk. He came back and sat down on the west corner of the front veranda, and at ten minutes after eleven returned and found that the room was empty. The operative's first act was to inform the New York office from an outside phone, at Murray's, not a minute from the Sawyer home—by motorcycle. He was now carrying out Updyke's personal orders, which were—"Stick around until I phone you!"

One thing that had a bearing on the case was Dr. Benton's talk with Parkins, earlier in the morning. The Updyke man was in the sick room at the time the doctor made his call and heard everything that was said. Parkins pleaded to be allowed to take a walk in the garden. The doctor opposed the idea, and stated that the patient could not walk a hundred feet without falling in a heap. Also, that another week in bed was necessary before making an attempt. It was now quite evident that Parkins had been "playing 'possum," and had succeeded in fooling the doctor by his apparent weakness of voice, as he plead for out-of-door exercise.

"That's him all over!" panted Villard, as the

particulars of the escape came to an end. "I'll talk with Updyke—that's all I can do. I'll see you later and let you know what I find out. Your help has been bully, as usual. Always grateful —see you later," said he, banging the receiver into place.

For a moment Villard stood mutely, with hands locked and eyes shut. Then, with the rage of a lion he sprang into action. Updyke's office was phoned, and "The Big Fellow" was on deck.

"I thought I'd be hearing from you pretty soon," said he, in reply to Villard's ring. "Don't worry—Sawyer's butler is one of my men—he got fooled the same as the rest of you. It shows that Parkins has more brains than one certain operative. I know one who is going to get shanghaied. The doctor's pessimism as to Parkins condition in the presence of my man simply threw him off his balance."

"Never mind the story, old boy. You did your best, but my Winifred is gone! She is in the hands of a villain!" shouted Villard.

"Well, keep your shirt on, old chap. Raving doesn't get you anywhere. My man got the news

to me before you knew anything had happened —or Sawyer either. What more do you expect in an instant?"

The growl in Updyke's voice was becoming noticeable, as Villard started in to apologize.

"I'm just about crazy—don't mind what I say. What else"—but Updyke ignored the interruption.

"I'm making no promises, but I'm expecting quick results," he continued. "Parkins is still on the Island, and the big limousine from McGonigle's garage isn't a racing machine. It can't take to the woods like a small car unless there is an accomplice who knows the way. I have twelve motorcycle men out on the job, and three high-speed roadsters. Every ranger that can be reached by the Chief Forester will assist, and many secret service men are already alert. I expect to hear news any moment."

"Where do you think he will head for?" inquired Villard.

"I don't think—I know where he is going—but I don't know when he will get there? I'm not going to tell you now, anyhow. You'd go up in

the air like a balloon," said Updyke with emphasis.

"Then tell me how you know he is going to a certain place. That will help some. You can see that I am almost crazy!"

"Well, then, brace up and listen. I called up McGonigle and asked him where Parkins was going in his big limousine and he fell for it. He stuttered, and hemmed and hawed, until I shouted a real message into his ear. I said, 'Talk quick or you will be in a hurry-up wagon on your way to police headquarters! That's what did the business."

"What did he say to that?"

"My God! On what grounds can I be treated in such a manner, he came back to me, but his voice was broken. I had him all right, and he knew I had him. So I answered back—'Because you're an accomplice, and by turning in evidence that will help convict Parkins you will soften the charge against yourself.' Then I said I'd help him, most probably, but he must first tell me the story from beginning to end, or shift for himself."

"Terrible!" sighed Villard. "And he had sold

himself to a counterfeit gentleman! I always thought well of McGonigle. I've known him for years."

"Well, to make a long story short, he told me everything—how Parkins' nurse had called him up, and told him of the plan, which was spoken of as an elopement, offering five hundred for a successful venture, and two-fifty in any event. Regarding Parkins as a rich man, and sporty, he took the offer. Now here is the real joker in the pack, and it shows that luck is still with me," laughed Updyke.

"Let's hear it," said Villard, in a voice less restrained.

"I had another matter on my slate having to do with McGonigle's garage, so I had sent one of my men over to apply for a job. He entered the place and found Mac all worked up because a man he had depended on to go out on a swell limousine job hadn't shown up. The upshot of it was that he took on my man and gave him a uniform to put on—one of the regular chauffeur turnouts. That's why I know that we're going to get Parkins, and get him soon."

"Henry, you are a wonder!—what is the next

step?" demanded Villard, chuckling in spite of his fears.

"The next step is for you to go and sit down with your morning papers," shouted Updyke. "I've got other phones waiting on me."

"Just one thing more—tell me where he's taking her," begged Villard.

"What's the use? He won't get her there?"

"Tell me anyhow—I'm stronger when I know the worst," pleaded Villard.

Updyke hesitated. He loathed the thought of letting his friend know the truth. But finally, in a rasping voice, almost choking with the rage that he had been trying to conceal, Updyke replied:

"Well, if you must know, the car started for Herman's Road House—otherwise known as "The Mad House."

With that Updyke threw his receiver on the hook, and asked his switch-board operator for the call next in line—but he was more than furious with himself for having yielded to Villard's entreaty.

CHAPTER XI.

MARY JOHNSON

"No news" reports coming in from operatives, and new instructions going out from "the old man" himself, was the routine of Updyke's office for the next hour. Mary Johnson, his secretary, of only a few months' experience, came timidly over to his desk and asked if he had looked over the Parkins record during the past month or so.

"I think there were some notations made by Miss Carew just before she left," said she.

"Bring it," snapped Updyke, abstractedly. Then as the girl turned to go he called her back.

"I'm sorry to have been cross with you, little woman, but you'll forgive me I know. This is a bad case, and every moment is precious. Hurry back with the report," said he, smiling into her alert blue eyes.

On her return he seized the record eagerly, and the girl bent over his shoulder and pointed out three memorandums, which he carefully read.

The addendum was in the handwriting of Miss Carew, and read as follows:

6-12—1919—has built shack on the ocean side of South Bay, opposite Smith Point. Two rooms, stove, kitchenette—goes there during summer months—at week-ends—place is made comfortable for duck shooting in late fall. Double bed—5-15-1920—Joined the Indian Head Social Club, near Jamesport, East of Riverhead. Membership composed almost entirely of divorcees, both men and women. Single men and pretty women, eligible. Golf club—card games—liquor lockers—thirty suites—baths—swimming pool—indoor athletics—free and easy—no questions asked—no interference. Open all year—once known as The Mad House, then Herman's Road House. Herman still owns it, but has modernized the place and bids for better clients under the guise of a social country club."

"Get Riverhead, and ask for George Carver, head clerk at the White House," said Updyke to the girl beside him. "Glad to note that some one is on the job around here," he added gruffly.

In less than three minutes the connection was made, but even to the man at the helm, minutes seemed hours—such was his mental strain.

"Hello, George—this is Updyke—Yes—fine, thank you—do you know William Parkins?—

only by sight—eh?—he belongs to Indian Head Social Club—find out if he is over there—call me back quickly—thanks—hurry boy!"

The next five minutes dragged along at a snail's pace, so overwrought was Updyke—and no less the efficient Mary Johnson. But the right tingle came along in due course of time.

"This you, Henry—all right—he telephoned from Yaphank for a parlor and bath suite—expected very soon—can I help you in any way?"

"You are still a deputy sheriff?" queried Updyke.

"Yes—they wouldn't take my resignation."

"Listen carefully, George—this is a serious matter. This man Parkins has kidnapped a beautiful, chaste girl, and is taking her to Indian Head, if I am not in error. You have a motorcycle?"

"Oh, yes—can't get along without one over here," replied Carver.

"Then hop it instantly, and ride for your life to that club. If Parkins hasn't arrived—thank God!—you stop him before he gets there, and save a great scandal that would ruin the girl.

She is as pure as snow, and is betrothed to the best friend I have on earth. Help me out, boy! Get that man Parkins—serve a 'John Doe' warrant on him and take him to the home of Drury Villard at Dreamy Hollow. It's a big black limousine, two men in front, and Parkins, with a woman accomplice, inside. The chauffeur is McGonigle's man, but the other fellow is my man. He may need help—he might be killed—but you save the day from scandal."

"I'll do my best, old-timer. What you have told me makes me see red. I may shoot the skunk," said he in a rasping voice. "If it was a Riverhead case, we'd tar and feather him."

"Go like the wind, George—and don't fail," replied Updyke, a husky tone in his deep voice.

When George Carver swung into the Jamesport road a cloud of dust trailed behind him until he stopped in front of the clubhouse. Parkins had not arrived, so everything was safe thus far. Turning back along the road he traveled leisurely and muffled the "cut-out."

Updyke had figured matters out almost to a nicety. Two miles west of Jamesport a limousine hove in view.

The car was coming fast, head-on for passage against all-comers. But Carver was an old hand at stopping speeders.

He jumped from his machine and laid it crosswise of the narrow road. Then with his feet on the wheel and his revolver pointed straight at the oncoming chauffeur, he shouted:

"Halt! or I'll kill you!"—and at once the emergency was applied to the brakes of the big machine, causing thereby a most gruesome noise.

"Hands up, chauffeur! Step off of your car—lie down on the roadside—belly to the ground!"

To the Updyke man he said—"If he makes a move kill him!"

Parkins, not yet discovered by either officer, had dropped to the floor and pulled a dust robe over his body. Carver tried to open the door, but it was locked from inside. The door on the other side was also bolted from within.

"All right, Parkins, you are going to have the merriest little test put up to you that a rascal of your stamp could conceive of in a life time!" shouted Carver. "At this moment you and your accomplice are shielding yourselves at the expense of a frail girl. She need have no fear—

you infernal coward! But unless you and that woman come out instantly, I'll break in the doors and hang both of you up by the thumbs. I am counting ten —one—two—three—four—five—get ready, 'Updyke man'—six——"

The door opened, and Mrs. Duke screamed as she saw Carver's badge.

Parkins came out first, with palms turned outward and was made to lay face-down, his arms stretched above his head. Then came the woman, to find, at the point of a revolver, that she had forfeited the chivalry of honest men.

"Now you, Updyke man, slip a pair of bracelets on both the man and the woman, while I do the same with the driver. Now, little lady," he added, addressing Winifred, "could you ride behind me on my motorcycle to Riverhead?"

Carver stood with hat in hand, smiling into her pallid face.

"Oh, I am sure I could," she whispered, frightened to the point of nervous breakdown.

"Then walk back along the road a little way while I prepare these kidnappers for a safe journey," said he, sneering down upon the prisoners.

"I wouldn't want you to see what I may have to do to them."

At the suggestion of the Updyke man each prisoner was handcuffed with arms behind, instead of in front, as was the usual practice in extreme cases.

"That's the safest way," said the operative, "and now we'll tie their feet to the foot rest—Parkins in front, by himself, and the woman and the chauffeur on the rear seat. I'll drive the car back to New York. Updyke will be waiting for them, all right enough!"

When the job was completed, the curtains were drawn and the doors locked from outside. Then the Updyke operative mounted the chauffeur's seat and headed the car toward the west.

Carver now helped the girl to mount his wheel, and then jumped into the saddle in front of her.

"Hold on to me tight—we're going to speed some!" said he, gaily, then he shot in the gas, and they were off for Riverhead, the limousine trailing in the dust close behind.

For a time the male prisoners eyed each other in sheepish fashion, but Mrs. Duke cried bitterly as the car skipped along. With her arms behind

her she had no means of wiping the tear-drops that plowed ridges through the dust on her face.

"I don't see how I ever got into this dreadful affair!" she moaned.

"Shut up!" shouted Parkins sharply. "They can't do anything with us. That would ruin the girl's reputation."

"But that man Updyke!—how did you ever conceive the idea that you could frustrate that brute's plans?"

"What do you know about him?" snapped Parkins.

"I've seen him, and that's enough! Oh, such a face!—such strength of purpose!—such——"

"Cut it out I tell you—or you will lose your chance, as a woman, to say that you had no thought of breaking the law. The girl and I were eloping and you were along as a friend. Do you get that?"

"You are so wonderful, Mr. Parkins—indeed you are," sighed Mrs. Duke, as her tears slackened. "I knew it the moment I saw you, all bruised and torn. Certainly she was eloping with you, and now I remember how sweetly she talked about you as we walked along the beach.

You had always been so kind to her father, and all that."

"See that you don't forget it," replied Parkins, already planning his way to freedom. "And also remember this—that when she was seized by these men, and we were arrested like kidnappers, I was taking her to one of the swellest country clubs in the land. We were to be married there, and you were to be the witness—see?"

Parkins' eyes flashed, and his lips curled into a cruel smile as he thought of the revenge he would take upon Villard and the girl, if called to the witness stand. How the reporters would enjoy it! And how Villard's face would burn with shame as lawyers for the defense drove home his crazy notions about spiritual communications!

The thought almost made him happy.

At Riverhead telephoning was in order. The car containing the prisoners was, by Updyke's order, to be driven through to New York and the culprits brought to his office. The girl, Winifred, would await the arrival of Villard's car at Yaphank, Carver gladly agreeing to convey her that far, changing to his runabout at Riverhead

—thus adding to her comfort until she would meet up with her friends.

Sawyer was so overcome with joy at "the news from the front," as he called it, that he insisted on being taken along with Villard. So, with Santzi as a mascot, and Jacques at the wheel, they were soon on their way. But aside from the joy in each breast, there was a grim thought in each mind—and small charity for Parkins and the nurse he had used as a foil.

Then, too, the shock of Winifred's strange disappearance had so upset the nerves of Alexander Barbour that he now hovered near "The Great Crossing." But the ever kindly Mrs. Bond had his case in hand, and the doctor had been called, although he had not arrived when Villard's party left for Yaphank.

"If Winifred will agree, we will be married tonight," said Villard, in an undertone, to Sawyer.

The latter did not reply, although he remained in deep thought for almost a mile, as shown by the speedometer.

"No, my friend," said he, finally, and with an effort to tell the truth without offending—"her

youthful dreams must not be wiped out in any such rough-shod manner. I know the big heartedness of your intentions, but Winifred is a girl and she must have the say. There are her old-time friends at Patchogue. Those she cares for should by all means be invited. She must have a fling of some pretensions or she will brood in silence at your lack of sympathy."

"Alas, you are right—as usual," sighed Villard. "However, my pessimism is newly born from the fruits of this evil day."

"There you go again—evil day! Why, it's the greatest day of your life! The girl over there among the stars has again reached out in your behalf, and this time the proof is positive of her watchfulness over you."

"Forgive me, Sawyer," said Villard simply, patting his friend on the knee. "My little girl shall take her own time and have a wedding after her own heart. Then Dreamy Hollow will wake up and amount to something!"

It was a wide-eyed and dusty little heroine that George Carver handed over at Yaphank. Santzi jumped out of the roadster and fairly

lifted her into the place between the two men on the back seat, who stood up to greet her.

At once she snuggled closely to Villard, and shivered, until finally he put his big arm about her and soothed her with gentle words of sympathy. Sawyer looked away from it all, his eyes moist at the girl's sweet simplicity, but Villard motioned Carver to his side of the car and leaned over and whispered—then put a card in his hand.

"Well, I may call in on you at your home some day, but I seldom go to New York. I've seen a little of Dreamy Hollow while riding by at times. The young lady sitting beside you has a strong heart and she knows how to keep up her nerve," said he, laughing up at her pale smiling face. "Most women would have had a sure enough fit, if placed in the same situation."

Then, doffing his cap, he said—

"Good-by, all," and offered his hand to the girl.

Kissing the tips of her dainty fingers Winifred held them out to him, and said—

"Good-by, sir. I shall never forget your kindness, and your bravery—nor will any of us," she

added, glancing from Carver to Villard, and back to Carver again.

And then, with a little sigh, she fell back between Villard and Sawyer and closed her eyes. Within a few minutes she was sound asleep. The adventure had taxed her beyond her strength.

That night Villard shivered in his sleep, but not from cold. There was a certain dread of misfortune—he knew not what—that filled his mind. Publicity, from a gossip standpoint, was his pet aversion. The thought of its blight upon his name, and the haunting fear of being pointed out as the man whose sweetheart had been kidnapped by one of his partners, simply brought out a cold sweat over his body. At midnight he could stand it no longer, whereupon he turned on his reading lamp and reached for the bedside telephone—then called up the hotel where Updyke lived, and was connected with his room.

The big fellow was just retiring when he answered the call.

"I expected to hear from you earlier in the evening," said he by way of greeting. "Hot old day, eh?"

"A great day, as it turned out to be—and

how I am ever going to get even with you I don't know!" said Villard with much feeling.

"Come off of that, or I'll send you a bill for services the first of the month," shouted Updyke.

"Well, you'd better, or I'll send you something you won't like—an insult of some sort about people who have big hearts and no wits for making money to 'feed the old gray mare' with."

"Don't worry—you're not out of the woods yet—but I won't check in on that until I get through with 'so and so' and a few of his crooked friends. I'm going out to see you to-morrow night and talk things over. I'll say that it's going to be some trick to keep this thing out of the papers," said Updyke, his voice carrying conviction. "It's a thousand dollar scoop if 'so and so' wants the money bad enough. I think he is 'all in' so far as ready cash is concerned. He didn't pull this trick just for the—you know what I mean."

"Yes—go on!"

"No, we will talk it out, with less danger. I'll run down later. I had one terrible time in third-degree stuff and have put him away for the night.

Me for the mattress and a pillow, for awhile. Get some sleep, yourself!"

"All right—and God bless you!" replied Drury Villard, as he shut off the light and settled down in bed. But there is no such thing as sleep for a wide-awake man.

A very small incident of the day kept creeping into his thoughts—young Carver! Had not his Winifred kissed her dainty hand as she held it out to him? Was it just a girlish impulse?—or was it the blood of youth responding to the call? Once planted, this tiny seed of uncertainty began to grow. The clock struck one—brooding time, for middle-aged men who roll and toss, and think dark things in the black hours of the night.

"It's only natural that youth responds to youth," said he to himself—"but I too am young in years, although my crowded life has made me old and out of tune with youth itself. I wonder if I have been fair to this child?" he mumbled impatiently. "I wonder, I——"

Then, suddenly, his mind relaxed, and over he went—"to the land of nod and dream."

On the following day Winifred spent the entire

morning in her father's room. He was ill at heart and in body. The events of the day before, coupled with those of the ten days preceding had worn him down to a frazzle of his old self. He longed for the peace and quiet of his own home. He missed his old acquaintances with whom he exchanged salutations each day from the standpoint of the weather—"fine day,"—"looks like some sorter change"—"it's about time for the rains to set it," and the like.

The good man was lonesome in the big Villard home, and added to that, a deep cold had settled on his chest and continuous coughing had exhausted his powers of combativeness. But at last he was asleep, coaxed by the soft hands of his daughter who gently smoothed his forehead and face, and combed his hair and scalp, all of which induced new circulation—and finally, a most welcome drowsiness, which terminated in peaceful slumber.

Tired almost to the point of exhaustion, Winifred sought the quiet of her cosy portico, on the second floor, overlooking the west garden, and there in a huge lounging chair sat Drury Villard, his eyes shut tight, and fast asleep.

She gazed upon his kindly face, and then, with the joy of youthful spirits, she put her hands over his eyes. Then in a voice deep as she could command she whispered into his ear.

"Who dares to break the stillness of my solitude when I am sleeping over a dull magazine article about the future prospects of rubber"—and that was as far as she got.

The big man reached out and closed his giant hand over her soft, dainty wrists, and drew her to a place beside him—tired little girl that she was. And there she sat and closed her eyes while he stroked her hair and whispered endearing words into a small pink ear—and told her a tale about *"The Old Man of the Sea,"* who—"whistled up the winds, and called for Davy Crockett, and together watched the fury of the waves."

Indeed, Drury Villard was a gentleman of the old school, and there are many, many verses to that rollicking old song, just right for a tired little "mother girl" who had attended her sick father for many long hours. It was no wonder that her eyelids closed and her body relaxed, when dreamland hove in sight.

And for more than an hour Villard held her

thus, while his brain teemed with plans for her happiness. And when she awoke they walked out among the flowered bushes and watched the sun go down.

"Now I must go to my father—I've neglected him too long, and he is so lonely!" said she; "and I am all he has left to comfort him."

Feeling that the end was near for Alexander Barbour, Villard shook his head, as sadly he reckoned upon the grief of the daughter. A matter of days, or a month at most, and his Winifred would become an orphaned child. Once more the thought came into his mind that the sick man would be less distraught if he knew that his daughter had the protection of a husband. He would settle the matter after advising with Updyke, who held opposite views to his own. With that in mind he went to his study and shut himself in.

Just as Villard was about to sit down he heard a gentle knock upon the panel of the door, an unusual occurrence, for the rule laid down by the master was that no one should be announced at this particular room except by phone.

Disturbed he jumped to his feet and stalked forward.

"Who's there!" he demanded, his hand gripping the knob.

"Alexander Barbour, sir," came the answer in a weak tone of voice.

"Oh—come right in, Mr. Barbour," said Villard, affably, as he threw the door wide open. "I very seldom hear a knock when I am in this room. All of the folks around the house know that I'm 'out' when I'm in here. But you are welcome."

"I'm sorry to have disturbed you," replied Winifred's father, who coughed as gently as he could, but his face turned red from the effort. "I didn't know," he said by way of apology.

"Sit down, dear man, and tell me what you have on your mind," encouraged Villard. "You may be sure of my interest."

"Sir, I—I want to go home—to die. My wife might not know where I was if I passed out here! She wouldn't likely think of finding me in this big mansion. I am dying sir—I must go home! It's only——"

"Yes, dear man, it's only a little while before

we all must take the same road. It is our fate—we can't dodge the issue. But what of Winifred? . . . You . . ."

Villard's voice broke off suddenly when he considered what he was on the point of saying.

"She will want to be near me during the crossover," said Barbour, nodding his head, indicating his certainty of his daughter's devotion.

Villard was upon the verge of humoring Barbour at any cost of time or trouble, when suddenly he thought of Parkins. What if he were to regain his freedom before the death of Barbour! Although now under restraint, the scapegrace had not been legally tried and convicted. The court might easily decide that the case was tantamount to an elopement, and Parkins, if arrested, allowed to give bail.

"I'll tell you what I think is best for the present, Mr. Barbour," said he, smiling into the eyes of the stricken man. "Mr. Updyke is coming out to-night, and of the three of us, he is most capable of judging the proper thing to do. I am sure he will find a way to safely bring about what you have suggested. But neither you nor I know just how. Now, isn't that a better plan?"

Alexander Barbour smiled feebly, but evidently approved of the idea. He had seen Updyke and knew he must be a power in his line of business, whatever that might be.

"You ought to know what is best, sir," replied the sick man. "I am not up in such matters—but I trust you with all my heart. My daughter is one of the sweetest young women in the world, and she must be protected wherever she is," he replied. "Maybe she'd be safer in a little town like Patchogue than among these grand homes on the Parkway."

"But she was more than just stolen when the accident occurred, friend Barbour. You can hardly realize the trap you both were headed for. But, of the two, your daughter would have fared the worst. Even if you had been killed by the man you trusted, you would have been better off than your innocent daughter," concluded Villard.

"Don't say another word, please," begged the father, who could not bear to have the subject referred to. "It isn't that I don't trust you, sir, it's because my child is my life, and I can't spare her—yet. Only a little while will I need her.

You can see that for yourself. I am on my way to her mother—I'll soon be with her. Then you may come for Winifred, and she will go with you. She loves you from the depths of her heart!"

Wearied by his effort, Alexander Barbour gave himself over to another spell of coughing, and failing to stop it, retired from the room. He had said his say about Winifred and there was nothing left for Villard to do but accede to his point of view. After all he had awaited so long the advent of the girl of his dreams, that he could afford, for the sake of all concerned, to accede to the father's wishes. But his Winifred should be safeguarded by day and night!

CHAPTER XII.

THE THIRD DEGREE

DRURY VILLARD waited impatiently and well into the dark of the night for the arrival of Henry Updyke at Dreamy Hollow. And when he did arrive, he was worn and weary to the point of brain fag. Parkins had been given the "third degree" and was now "a master crook"—according to the man who for two hours had raked him fore and aft with scathing contempt and pitiless ridicule. Hour after hour Updyke had battered at the portal of his victim's brain, until, at last, it creaked—then, opened wide to the flood of light that revealed the manner of man he was. The big fellow was glad, indeed, that Villard had not been present. Soft-hearted men had no place in such proceedings.

Updyke was not the only one to ply the questions. The Updyke "system" was there in force—certain lawyers—trained for the work, who came to browbeat and cajole, to threaten and

scorn. To none of these had the case of Winifred Barbour been confided—that was a job which the master mind reserved for itself. Old matters long since condoned were exhumed whereby to wear the culprit down to a full confession of his most recent exploit. When that moment arrived the man was limp, dazed and completely shorn of combativeness.

Then came Updyke himself, and along with him five additional operatives, fierce of eye, solemn, and noiseless, as they arranged their chairs in semicircle formation, the better to confront the would-be kidnapper. Two shorthand men took seats, one on either side of the witness —then the steel door, to the great concrete "sweat room," was closed with a bang—and locked against further admissions. All this had been done within three minutes, and with studied intent, that the witness should not have the advantage of an unnecessary moment of respite.

The Barbour matter was Updyke's own case and he went about it "hammer and tongs." To the stenographers he said—

"Every word must be taken down verbatim—see that your notes compare, rigidly alike, at the

close of the confession." Then to Parkins he bawled—

"Sit up like a man and tell the truth! Don't try to lie, for we know every side of the case and you will only serve yourself a bad turn if you try any smart-aleck subterfuge. The more you tell of your deviltry the fewer the witnesses that will be brought in to testify against you. It's up to you, whether or not you gain credence with those who confront you—all sworn officers of the law—who have no prejudices to start with, but will give you all that is coming to you should you lie in an attempt to save yourself. For once in your life it will pay you to be honest! Talk out loud so every one present can hear you plainly, or you will get a bucket of ice water in your face! No foolishness—we will now begin—sit up straight and don't look annoyed. You are the star actor in this drama."

To Martin Leroy, one of the stenographers, a public notary, he winked. Then said—"Swear this man to tell the truth!"—and turning toward the much-perturbed Parkins he shouted—"Stand up and raise your right hand!"

The notary knew full well that such an oath

had no legal force—but it was part of the sweating process.

Weak from mental anxiety, Parkins struggled to his feet. When he had repeated the last words of the oath—"so help me God"—he fell back into his chair exhausted. All bravado had left him.

"Sit up straight, and answer the questions that are put to you," commanded Updyke, whose deep voice and ominous frown bore down upon the wilting degenerate until he squirmed in his chair.

"Stop that fidgeting, and make up your mind that the truth will serve, but the lie will condemn!" he shouted.

"Now sir"—began the man whose iron blood coursed through veins of corresponding vigor—"state your full name, your age, place of birth, residence, and avocation."

"I was born in New York City—and, er——"

"Speak up!" shouted the inquisitor. "A brave kidnapper would never cringe like a starving puppy."

"I am thirty-five years old, and I was born——"

"Here in New York—we managed to get that.

Go on with the rest," said Updyke, gruffly, well knowing the advantage of getting in a quick first blow.

Then came the answers to the other questions in sequence from the beginning.

"Now tell us the story of your life—the good—and the bad—the indifferent," commanded Updyke. "We know it, pretty well now, but we want it from your own lips, so, by comparison with our records, we will know whether or not you are lying."

Parkins' face turned purple at the thought of his predicament. To be stigmatized as a liar in the presence of men was as a blow in the face.

"It's—it's a long story—not all bad," said he, reminiscently. "There was a time when none could say anything against me. I am a victim of drink and narcotics. If I could go somewhere—find a place in which I could be cured, I would begin over again. Often the feeling comes to me to run away from it all—but where could I go? The stuff is found everywhere! Most men drink, to some extent, but are moderate. To one of my temperament, one drink means a drunk, for I cannot quit until I become a sodden rotter."

"That is a sad state of affairs, Parkins, but interesting—go on with your story," snapped Updyke, his eyes fixed cruelly upon the man in the witness chair.

"There are many things and many angles, to a life such as mine," began Parkins, nervously. "I was orphaned when a small boy, and grew up on the streets of the city. I sold papers, slept in delivery wagons, tended furnaces, did odd jobs—anything to keep going—but they were happy days. After a time I became a messenger boy, in uniform, and to find myself in decent clothing gave me an uplift. But that job was my ruination. It took me into vile places as well as the best of homes, clubs and hotels. A messenger boy goes where he is sent—into a saloon, a house of shady repute, or a home on the avenue."

Here Parkins paused and wiped his face with a silken kerchief. At a glance he could see that his story, thus far, had been listened to attentively.

"But it was not at any of those places that I took my first drink," he continued. "A stag dinner of young college fellows at one of the leading hotels required some one to attend the door. A

ring for a messenger took me out on the job. They had expected a man, and here was I, with my brass buttons, red stripes, and cap to match the blue coat and trousers. The party was well under way when I arrived, and when I opened the door and announced who I was, and what I was wanted for, a big howl of laughter took place. 'The Doorman!' shouted one fine big fellow, as he grabbed me and stood me in the center of a very large dining table. At once they proposed a toast to 'The Doorman,' and I was 'it' from then on. They served me a tiny cocktail, which I drank without trouble, although it was my first. One man protested, and was brushed aside. But another fellow handed me a glass half filled with champagne. That appealed to me, and I asked for more, whereupon several guests shook their fists at the man who gave it to me. To stop the fight I shouted in regular newsboy language—'What's de matter wid you'se fella's. I drink dis stuff wid me breakfas' ev'ry day of me life!'—then I began to feel dizzy."

"Very interesting," observed one of the operatives to another in a whisper.

"Then what happened?" grunted Updyke, less gruffly.

"The next thing I knew I woke up in a wonderful room. It was part of a suite in one of the swell hotels of those days—the old Fifth Avenue —and a kindly faced woman arose and came over to me. I was all right—and I told her so. I wondered why she had on nurse's clothing, but later on learned that all hotels had a head nurse. A few hours later a very bright faced, well dressed young man, not over twenty-one, came rushing in. His eyes twinkled, and he patted me on my cheeks—'Never again for you—young fellow!' he said—then—'I nearly got my jaw broke last night at the fraternity smoker. I'm only a freshman, and unfortunately the man who was serving you wine was a senior. Don't you ever let another drink go down your throat as long as you live!' he urged—and I promised."

"Who was that man? Did you learn his name?" asked Updyke.

"Yes—Drury Villard," sighed the witness. "He did not drink, and had his senses about him. If I had stuck to his advice, this situation would never have come about."

A blank expression came over the face of Updyke when the name of Villard was spoken. In a brown study he paced the concrete floor for several moments, then suddenly he turned toward his operatives and dismissed them from the room.

"The inquiry will be private between this man and myself—except the stenographers, who will make of this case a separate verbatim report. They will be kept on file for further reference," growled Updyke, scowling at Parkins.

When the door was shut upon the operatives, Parkins, relieved, again took up the history of his life.

"The upshot of my meeting with Drury——"

"Mister Villard!" corrected Updyke. "You have forfeited, many times over, his respect for you. He is no longer an intimate friend of yours —now proceed."

"Mr. Villard got me a place in an office downtown—an investment company, now merged with another concern. There is where I learned to figure in a financial way. I——"

"Yes—and you stole a ten-dollar bill, and was caught at it!" bellowed Updyke, breaking in on the testimony. "Don't miss anything—I know

your record, and it won't hurt you to refresh your memory of your rascality."

Parkins winced, but he had no courage with which to combat his interrogator.

"That one overt act made an honest man of me for several years. When Drury—I mean Mr. Villard—came out of college as a graduate, he returned to New York, bent on going into a business that was entirely new. We met on Broadway one day, and he was very cordial. He asked all about myself and I told him I was still at the old place."

"Didn't tell him about the ten spot, though—did you?" leered Updyke, intentionally. He would leave no loophole for sentimental nonsense by which Parkins might try to crawl back into his good graces.

"No," said the witness, dully. "I had learned a lesson that I thought unforgetable. I had become an honest man, and I would be yet—only for drink," he added, sadly.

"Yes—and for drugs, and bad companions, and the natural-born tendencies of a crook," snarled Updyke.

"Perhaps so," responded Parkins wearily.

"As I was going to say, I met Mr. Villard, and after a most friendly conversation he seemed to think I was the right man to help steer the new organization he had in contemplation. His mind was that of a dreamer of great projects, while my own was full of the figures with which to carry out big financial undertakings. I had practical experience against his theoretical college training. We were well met, at the time. He had personality and tremendous energy, to say nothing of wealthy acquaintances—fathers of his college chums. So he——"

"Yes—I follow," said Updyke. "He took you in as an expert in financial figures, and made you treasurer, also gave you his whole hearted support in every way, and finally gave up active work in the business, thus practically turning it over to you to run," sneered Updyke. "But that is all off now. You are done for—where you will land is not yet decided upon. But you may be well assured that you will miss the golden opportunity that was yours only a short while back. You are a failure—a dishonest, worthless drunkard!" concluded the big fellow who now advanced to a

position where he could look into Parkins' eyes and fill them with fear.

The witness, already faint from Updyke's relentless tongue lashing, wavered in his chair, though making great effort to steady himself. He craved a stimulant—wine, beer, whisky—anything to quench the parching thirst within him. At this point Updyke handed him a drink of cool water, and he swallowed it down at a gulp. The effect was carefully noted, the demeanor of Parkins almost immediately changing back to normal. He asked for another and that was given to him. Then he sat up, quite refreshed, and indicated that he was ready to proceed.

"Did you ever consider the fact that water is one of nature's greatest stimulants?" queried Updyke.

"I never thought of it as a stimulant, but rather as a necessity," was Parkins' reply.

"Now then, I'll ask you a question that might help you if you ever test its meaning. You have just drank two glasses of cool, fresh water—would you care to take a drink of liquor on top of them? Would your appetite call for whisky, now, if you saw it before you?"

Parkins carefully considered the matter, remaining in deep thought for several moments, as he analyzed his desire for strong drink.

"No, I wouldn't care for any sort of liquor, at the moment," he replied. "I seem to have appeased my thirst for the present."

"Then why not drink your fill of water the next time your stomach craves an intoxicant," suggested Updyke. "Of course your dissipation has undermined your powers of resistance and you might have some trouble at first—but it's worth a try-out. Anyhow you will be afforded the opportunity," suggested the big fellow.

At this point of the inquisition Updyke found himself approaching the main issue—the affair concerning Winifred Barbour. All else had been more or less the paving of the way to that subject, and taking the combativeness out of the witness. Now the time had come when Updyke felt compelled to take the chance. Parkins' testimony was necessary to his plans, and if successfully brought out the case against the man himself was "nailed down and copper riveted," a time-worn expression, that Updyke often used. Before starting on the subject he drew a table

between himself and the witness, and placed upon it an automatic revolver. This action very naturally caused Parkins to look up in alarm, and also the stenographers.

"No one need be afraid of that little thirty-eight. It's harmless," said Updyke. "I've carried it for years and have never shot any one with it —yet. But I am always prepared to use it instantly, as I carry it in a hidden holster just under the left side of my coat. Now I am going to leave it there, in plain view on the table, at present, for I am about to question the witness concerning his intentions toward a certain young woman, on a certain day, not long since. The name of the girl is not to be spoken. Parkins will speak of her as 'the girl,' and the stenographers will write it that way. If Parkins, either by accident or design, speaks her name I'll shoot him the moment he utters it! What I am now saying is a personal matter, and must not go into the record. When I hold up my hands the recorders will proceed."

Immediately Updyke raised his hand.

"Now then, Parkins, I want nothing but the truth out of you. Lying will be your undoing,

if you expect clemency. You remember the day of the accident?"

"Yes, sir—I do," replied the witness.

"A few days before that you invited the girl, and her father, to take a trip to New York with you in your automobile, did you not?"

"I did, sir. They had never been to New York, and being friends of long standing I invited them to go in my car—and the date was set."

"Why do you sit there and lie in answer to my first question!" yelled Updyke, his face denoting extreme anger.

Parkins grew pale at the sudden fury of his inquisitor.

"I meant to tell you the truth," he replied meekly.

"Parkins, your habit of lying is constitutional. Maybe you don't know how to speak the truth—even under oath. You said the girl and her father were old friends of yours, didn't you?"

"That was a mistake—unintentional," said Parkins, now thoroughly alarmed.

"You had known them for about six weeks," snapped Updyke. "No more lying, or there will be some one hung up by the thumbs so he will

remember to tell the truth thereafter. Now then —I'll ask you to tell me how and when you got acquainted with her?"

"I bought some cakes, and pies, at her stand on the motor parkway at Patchogue," said the witness.

"Started in by kidding her, didn't you?"

"Perhaps—I don't quite recall," replied Parkins, mystified as to Updyke's source of information.

"Yes you do recall—and you also remember apologizing to her for calling her 'little sister'—now don't you? Speak up—say yes or no," growled the big fellow, as he stared the witness out of countenance.

"Yes"—replied the witness, his face now almost purple.

"You have a so-called hut on the ocean side—did you ever drive her out that way?"

"Yes—once."

"Showed her all the conveniences, too—didn't you?—the kitchenette and everything?"

"I presume I did—that would have been the natural thing," replied Parkins.

"You really think so—eh? Don't you know

that you are lying again? Well, now, you quit that stuff! I wasn't born yesterday," snarled Updyke as his eyes sought those of the man on the witness stand.

"Now I'm going to ask you a question," he continued, "that is going to stagger you!—what were your intentions toward her had you got her safely to New York? Be careful—say nothing but the truth!"

Updyke's steady eyes caused Parkins to shut his own and consider well before answering. How his persecutor could know so much was beyond his power to reckon. But he had to answer. The question was categorical.

"I meant to marry her," he blurted.

"Open your guilty eyes and tell me that again," shouted Updyke, bending over the table where lay the automatic. "It was to be a mock marriage—now wasn't it?—'poor little country maid!' Do you remember your maudlin conversation with yourself in your apartment the morning you were fired out of Dreamy Hollow? Of course you do—and only an act of God saved her from experiencing a try-out of your scheme. You had won her trust, and that of her father, who

was to be allowed to 'drift'—wasn't he? Zim's Midnight Inn was a fine place to sup and drink—and tempt! you—scoundrel!—but God saved the girl by upsetting your car—her father is at death's door!"

"Oh, merciful heaven—stop this cruel torment! I am going crazy! I'm——"

But Parkins could go no further. He put his face in his hands and sobbed, while Updyke pulled forth a long black cigar and lighted it. He was "dying" for a smoke, and now was his chance. The stenographers, used as they were to "third degree" work, showed signs of pity for the wretched man on the stand. They watched Updyke, too, and saw him touch a button on the wall near the door. Then they saw him go to a speaking tube and heard him say—"Send him in. . . ."

During the interim Parkins never lifted his head, until he heard the rasping noise of the steel door as it opened and closed. When he raised his eyes to see what was going on, there stood his valet and man of all work, talking with Updyke. They shook hands cordially and stood near the door, talking to each other for several

minutes. By that time Parkins, red eyed and sullen, had assumed an air of defiance. His own man had trapped him, and a desire to kill crept into his mind. There lay the automatic—one jump would be sufficient, and it would be "all off" with Updyke! A wonderful chance, and he would take it—but his mind moved slowly. Updyke, standing at the far end of the room, knew his thoughts and laughed at him, mockingly—

"No use, Parkins—it isn't loaded. Here's it's mate," he said, flashing it quickly, "and it's all set for action."

Then, walking toward the table, he picked up the other weapon and emptied it of six cartridges, and put them in his pocket.

"It was loaded, after all," said he. "Very careless of me—eh—Parkins? Allow me to introduce you to one of our most valuable operatives—Mr. Parkins—Mr. Michael Curran. He says you have the best equipped sideboard in the city."

Parkins was dumfounded.

The trusted servant was an Updyke "plant," and his case now seemed hopeless. There was nothing to say, and his eyes sought the floor.

"Look up, and face the music," nagged the re-

lentless Updyke. "A brave fellow like you who connives against young women and sickly fathers surely must be a courageous man! What were your real intentions toward that girl?" yelled the big fellow, pointing his finger at the wilted Parkins.

"I had no real plan," said he finally. "I was sober when I took her into my car, and I meant to keep sober. No man in his right mind would offer insult to an innocent girl."

"Is that so!—then why did you, absolutely sober, and after ten days in bed with a wounded scalp—kidnap her and start for Herman's Roadhouse?" snarled Updyke. "For the sake of counterfeiting respectability the name has been changed to fool decent people. It is called a social club—bah!"

"I—I—ah—or rather I should say—we were eloping—we were going to be married! She and I are engaged, and——"

"Stop right where you are! Now I want you to look me squarely in the eye and tell me that lie over again."

Updyke's lowering face at once took on the look of a demon. His right hand stole slowly under

the left side of his coat and his eyes seemed to be turning green.

"It was a lie! Don't shoot me! I'll tell the truth, sir," screamed the witness. "You already know every move, every thought, every act—what's the use? Do what you will but don't ask more questions—I'm done for!" he ended, as he swooned and fell forward, but Updyke caught him in time to save him from injury.

The erstwhile "valet," stepped forward and helped to lift the limp body to the table in front of him, the barrier that had stood between him and his tormentor.

"The jig is up!" said Updyke, grimly, two big tears rolling down his rugged cheeks. "We have it all. His guilt cannot be questioned. And that's the only reason why the so-called third-degree inquisitions are to be tolerated. Slap cold water on his face. He'll come out of it in a minute or so."

Turning to Curran, he whispered—"Stay with him, and when he is fully aroused help him up to my suite upstairs and put a guard in with him. He can't get out, but he needs company," said he significantly. "I'm going out to Dreamy Hol-

low as soon as I get first copies of the testimony. Order my car around as soon as you can—no hurry—tell Miss Johnson to phone for it to be ready in an hour."

With that the big fellow left the "star chamber" with its windowless walls and concrete floor, a sigh of relief escaping from between his yawning jaws. He was tired, dead tired, and victory won, left no feeling of elation in his breast.

"Justice is hell for some and joy for others," said he to himself as he stole his way through to the private door into his office. Updyke's mind was upon the man that had collapsed under his lash and the cruelty of it had left its imprint upon his own heart.

A few hours later he was welcomed by the master of Dreamy Hollow.

"I've come to stay until the day after tomorrow. I need a day off," said Updyke, as he grasped the welcoming hand of Drury Villard. "I'm all in and I want to go to bed at once."

Villard scrutinized him carefully, and decided that his friend and guest knew what was best for himself.

"I'd planned for a lively evening—what is the news of the day? Did you——"

"Yes—here it is, all typewritten, and will afford you an evening of varying emotions. Show me a room—that's all I ask. To-morrow we will both be fresh, and will talk things over. No food —I snacked in my office," said the master inquisitor.

And so it was settled, and a short time thereafter Villard sat alone in his office, reading the testimony of his old-time friend, now a self-confessed pariah, and a conscienceless scoundrel. When he had finished his lips trembled, and his heart cried out against the villainy of his once trusted partner. He now loathed him as he would a viper, and there was nothing left in his bosom but abhorrence. In his present mood, good man that he was, Villard felt that he could have looked on without mercy while the low creature was strung up and tortured.

"No wonder Henry left, and went to his bed," he mumbled to himself. "Case hardened as he is to crime and malevolence, his soul has been seared with the events of this day."

Villard arose to his feet and slipped quietly

out into the night, where his heated brain could be cooled and his senses restored. He hurried on toward the beach as if bewildered, caring naught for the bats that darted in front of him, and the limbs of bushes which swung back and whipped his face. The Parkins' confession stood out as might a picture of Herod cleaving the heads of helpless babes, and watching their writhing bodies as they fell at his feet.

What Villard would have done, or where he would have gone in his madness to rid himself of his obsession was a matter of conjecture, but for a terrible coughing spell on the part of some person just ahead of him. It was Alexander Barbour, bundled from head to foot against the chill of the night, who stumbled along the same path, only a few yards in advance. His walk was painful, and his voice hollow and unreal as he cried—"I want to go home to die!"

This dismal wail brought Villard back to his senses, and he ran forward in time to catch the man in his arms. For a moment there was a struggle but Barbour was too feeble to resist.

"You shall go to-morrow," whispered Villard, "and your daughter will go with you. The time

has come when it will be safe for her to return to her native town, and I shall take you both home in the morning. I know how you feel, and I sympathize. Come, let us go back into the warmth of your room."

Some hours previously Winifred had helped her father into his bed, and stood over him, while rubbing his forehead and chafing his icy hands. She had placed a small electric heater at his feet.

"They feel like lumps of ice," he complained, but to the soft touch of Winifred's hands upon his forehead he succumbed to nature's balm—sleep without pain.

For half an hour she stayed beside him, and then as his hands relaxed and his breathing became normal, she knelt and prayed for his restoration to health and happiness.

Then she went to her room, but on returning a few minutes later the bed was empty—her father had gone. She notified Santzi at once, who gave the alarm, but when all hands had taken up the search, they came upon Villard and with him was the night-clad figure of Winifred's father. There was much in the way of speculation as to the result of the sick man's adventure,

but the night nurse, arriving soon afterward, said that his effort to help himself might turn out to his advantage.

All through the excitement, Updyke slept on unknowing, but Winifred and Villard sat out on the moonlit veranda and talked of the plans for the morrow. He felt that she should be told of Parkins' "detention" pending further developments, but in no way did he intimate the happenings at the Updyke inquiry.

"I think your father should go back to his old home at Patchogue for a time. This place palls upon him and he will never be happy here. You must go with him, of course, and I shall ride over every day or so to see how he is getting on. We must not allow him to die from longing for his old home, where your mother lived and died. That's his trouble—and if I were in his place I'd feel just as he does."

"I believe you have solved his problem, and I am very glad you have thought it all out for us. We are plain country folk, and fairyland is too much for us. Indeed we have grown in experience since we left our little country home. But our country eyes have been opened to the love

we feel for our native town and its people. There is where we belong," said Winifred, dreamily, as her face broke out into smiles.

"You shall have your wish, dear child," said he, gently. "There is nothing that I would deny you."

"But you wouldn't live there," bantered Winifred, throwing back her head and laughing at the idea. "We'll wait and see how you hold to your resolution to 'ride over every day or so.' My, how my friends would get together and gossip! I just dare you to try it," she gurgled, as she held out her hand and bade her host good night.

"No—you don't get off that easy," said Villard, striving to catch her up in his arms, but she escaped through the door of her father's chamber and tiptoed in to see if he was resting comfortably.

"All is well," she whispered on her return, looking up into Villard's eyes—"so you may return to your den, Mr. Lion—it's bedtime for me!" she laughed, as she started to go.

"And kissing time for me," laughed Villard, reaching out as if to take her in his arms.

"No, sir—this is the kind of kiss you shall

have," cried Winifred, as she put her arms about his neck and her lips upon his forehead. Then she blushed, and sighed, a shyness creeping into her eyes.

"Only a kiss on my forehead!—not surely——"

"If I ever do kiss a man on the lips it will be the one to whom I am wedded—not before," said she, her face lighted with honest conviction.

"Don't forget that I am going out Patchogue way very often, in the future," he warned.

"I am sure my father and I will be ever so proud if you will come to our home as often as you can," replied Winifred, as prettily she dropped him a curtsey in a quaint, old-fashioned way.

CHAPTER XIII.

WINIFRED MEETS UPDYKE

NEXT morning Henry Updyke was literally up with the larks, and there were plenty of them about the premises of Dreamy Hollow.

At six o'clock he betook himself into the open for a morning stroll. Winifred was also astir, for the call of Patchogue was in her heart, and she must be ready. But it was far too early to arouse the household, so now was her opportunity to once more behold the dreamland from which she would soon be on her way. To the beach and back was her first intention, as vivid memories clustered about its sandy slope, where she had gazed far out beyond the bay to the very ocean itself, and dreamed of "Castles in Spain." And now she would look for those castles again, and the cliffs of Fort Hancock, over Sandy Hook way, easily seen from the place where she sat on the day of her startling adventure. Fearful of the dew damp of early morning she took the

inside path and was soon at the waters' edge. And now she sat down, oblivious to all save the waters, which moaned as they came in great waves, and sang as they splashed in diabolic fury and broke into gems of rainbow hue. And there was no one to disturb the thoughts within her mind, for which she was glad, only to turn her face toward the west, and there stood a huge man, calmly looking down upon her.

"Don't be frightened," said the big fellow, smiling down upon her. "You surely have not forgotten your father's friend, who used to hold you on his knee and tell you stories, and bring you books from the city."

"Mr. Updyke!" gasped Winifred, looking guiltily into his smiling face, then suddenly she exclaimed—"I've seen you but recently, have I not?"

"Yes—but you can't guess when and where," he laughingly replied, at which the girl looked far out to sea and pondered.

"Of course I can, only it must have been a dream. Indeed, I saw you in a dream. You, and another man, whom I had never seen, stood before me. You said something about it being

time for me to get up and prepare breakfast for father. And something about opening up the stand—now isn't that true?"

"Practically, those were my words. You had slept entirely too long, so I tried a little trick on you and it worked for an instant. Then you went back to sleep. It is dangerous to sleep too long. Who do you think was with me?"

"Another man. I haven't seen him since. It wasn't the doctor?"

"No, it was Mr. Villard," replied Updyke, watching the effect of his words. "I never saw a man so anxious in my life."

"Oh, isn't he the dearest soul! I just love him—he has been so kind to father and me, and he is going to run us over home this morning in his car. We are leaving to-day for good, and we may never see New York after all," she concluded, shaking her head sadly.

"You'll have a different driver next time than the one you started out with," suggested Updyke, dryly, as Winifred looked down at the sand and revolved a certain question that she had in mind. It concerned Parkins' whereabouts, but she did not ever want to speak his name again.

"Where is he now?" she asked, briefly, but without malice in the tone of her voice.

"Probably in New York somewhere," replied Updyke. "I don't think he will try any more 'elopements' for the present."

Winifred looked up in surprise.

"Is that what he calls an elopement?" she asked, blushing deeply. "I thought elopements were by mutual understandings. Are they not?"

"That's what they use to mean before Bill Parkins set the new fashion," he laughed, as she looked up and caught the twinkle in his eyes.

"I hope you see something besides humor in his actions," she replied quite soberly, after a lengthy pause.

Updyke saw at once that Winifred Barbour's old-fashioned purity of heart and mind had been in no way affected by her sad experience.

"Now I've gone and said something that I didn't mean," said he quickly. "No girl, with a mother like you had, will ever need a champion for her code. She will maintain that standard through life. What time are you leaving for home?" queried the big man.

"About nine, I believe."

"Then we had better turn back," said Updyke reaching for Winifred's hand and helping her to her feet. "I think you will never have occasion to worry about Parkins in the future. I believe that he has gone out of your life forever," he concluded, looking testily into her face.

But Winifred needed no coaching to that effect. "All the king's horses" could never put the man Parkins back into her life. But she said nothing on that score to the big man trudging along beside her. Finally she asked—

"Do you know much about this matter, Mr. Updyke?"

"Just a trifle," he replied. "I heard a rumor now and then about the case, but it's been kept so quiet that your neighbors won't have an inkling of it when you get back. They only know of the accident, so if I were you I'd say nothing about anything else. You wouldn't want your picture in the paper and a great 'howdye do' kicked up with your name in it—now would you?" asked Updyke, stopping in order to impress her mind upon certain angles of the case.

"Of course not—I should simply wilt and die if my name should be printed in the newspapers."

"Naturally so, and no matter how innocent you really are, there are those who would enlarge the matter into scandal, if we fail to adopt a certain plan," said he, gently. "Now listen carefully, little girl. Everybody in Patchogue knows that Parkins' car was ditched and that you had a close call—also your father—and that Parkins was almost killed. They know that you were taken into the Villard home, and that you are all right and will soon be home. Julie Hayes has been faithful to you and your booth is well cared for. Now—remember this—no one must know about the other episode—the abduction. If that ever raises its head you will never live it down in your life, no matter where you might go—and you are the one to tell your father the consequences of confiding with any living soul."

"I will merely speak of the accident, and I will warn father to do the same," said Winifred, looking gratefully up into the big man's eyes.

"That's the idea—all you will talk about is the accident, and, if ever anything else is hinted at, just ask what that person means, and never acknowledge a word of truth that may be uttered as hearsay. You had an accident, and it laid

you up, but you have fully recovered and the whole matter is in the past and practically forgotten."

Winifred now understood the program fully, and made up her mind to follow instructions literally. And she vowed that her father would do the same. Then, suddenly, she thought of young Mr. Carver, but hesitated to bring up his name. At last she determined that she must be instructed on that point.

"What about Mr. Carver?" she asked nervously.

"No worry in that direction—he is a sworn officer of the law and is fond of certain people who would be sorry to be involved in a story, even in a small way. He is one of the finest young men I know, and he is progressing rapidly in all ways. Some day he will be a rich man. He is brainy, and coming to the front all over Long Island. He may go far!" concluded Updyke, who knew the value of good friendship toward a man who aspired.

"I—I am ever so glad you have talked to me about all these matters, and now please tell me who you are so I'll know why you have interested

yourself in our behalf," said Winifred, her voice reflecting her real thoughts.

She had no artifice by which to speak with double meaning.

"Oh, I am a friend of Mr. Villard's, and he and I would naturally pull together. He is a fine man, but the dear fellow is lonesome. Too bad he doesn't marry some sweet natured home body that would love him, and drive away the solitude of this wonderful place," replied Updyke, waving his hand at the well kept premises.

They were now at the east entrance of the stately home and he opened the door for her to enter.

"I shall hope to see you again, sir—some time. You have been exceedingly kind and I promise to act upon your suggestions."

Then she added, "I am glad you are a good friend of Mr. Villard's. He needs companionship."

A little later on, with herself and father already seated comfortably in Villard's smart touring car, she was surprised when Mr. Updyke got in and asked to be allowed to sit beside Mr. Barbour. This change brought Vil-

lard into the seat beside Winifred. But she thought she saw the reason for it by the way Updyke brought the sick man out of his doldrums.

"You are going to feel a lot better when you get back to your old haunts," said he, affably. "When a man spends a lifetime in one place, there is where his heart belongs. He should seldom leave it—your world is there," said Updyke, by way of getting acquainted.

And then he began to point out various interesting spots, with something historical about them which caused neighboring householders to think with pride upon their wonderful locations. In fact, the big fellow took Alexander Barbour's mind away from his troubles and made him feel how well he would be in a few days when he got back into the tang of the salt air at good old Patchogue. Winifred marveled at the manner by which this stranger could so install himself in one's good graces. These same scenes along the parkway interested herself as well, and she remarked upon the difference between a leisurely ride in comfort, as against the scarifying speeders who infested the southern drive. Such had been

the only other experience of her lifetime. But, by way of comparison, the smooth, almost jarless driving of Jacques, with Santzi by his side, was to her the acme of delight.

And so the journey continued all the way out to Patchogue, and the little home, where the sleek and silent car came to a final stop. Into the spick and span cottage all four entered and it wasn't long before the father was put to bed, and Winifred, in gingham apron, engaged herself in preparing a dainty luncheon from her jams and preserves together with hot biscuit and coffee. A small jar of cream and big dab of butter were borrowed in neighborly fashion over the back fence, also a chunk of cold ham, representing good measure in the heart of the neighbor. Thus for two hours the little home gave a good account of itself and when saying good-bye Villard looked wistfully into the eyes of sweet Winifred and asked a serious question.

"Do you know how much I love you, dear?"

"With all your heart—I know," she answered.

"When shall I come again?" he pleaded, with eyes that smiled into her own.

"As often as you feel disposed. I shall have

no time to attend the little business place we own. But I shall keep it open with help from others. I fear the worst about father."

And when it was time to go back home Villard made no further overture of his love than to hold her hand and to squeeze it tightly. He longed to kiss her but he knew her code—only a husband could claim that right.

Two days later, Alexander Barbour passed away, and Winifred put on mourning. During her grief the whole town became interested in her affairs, and with Julie Hayes at the business helm, she took her time, and thought out her future. Seemingly everybody called at her home; even George Carver of Riverhead made a special trip to pay his respects. There had been an episode in her life in which he had figured heroically, and she had made a vast impression upon his youthful mind. With the best of intentions, and with due consideration of her bereavement, he did not come often, nor did Villard, owing to the small talk that might arise from too frequent calls. For the sake of companionship she gained consent of Julie Hayes' parents by which the young girl became her com-

panion at home, as well as her clerk at the booth on the Parkway.

With regard to Villard's calls, it had been hinted by Winifred that the Sabbath was a day when visits would be most welcome and that going to church together would be better for her, and add to his prestige—now growing in the town. He had become fond of the place and made many acquaintances. Land deals were active through his ability to furnish money for building purposes. Every citizen was charmed by his modest simplicity and if ever a man owned a townful of ardent boosters it was Drury Villard.

On one particular Sunday George Carver left the Barbour cottage just as Villard drove up, and Winifred and Julie had gone out to the gate as he took his leave. Then, for the first time Winifred noted a shadow creeping over the face of Villard, though he smiled affably, and shook hands with the younger man.

"You are just in time for a good dinner," said Carver. "Sorry I have to go, but it is necessary. My loss is your gain," said the young man gaily, but there were times when he wondered if her sweet consideration could be turned into love.

When Carver had gone both Winifred and Julie each grasped the arm of the solemn Villard, and in less than a minute his face was all smiles.

"Julie, we will have to be careful about allowing our callers to cross each other's paths," teased Winifred. "Did you notice how quickly our Mr. Carver mounted his wheel when our Mr. Drury Villard drove up? Shall we invite them to a duel?" laughed Winifred, seizing one of his big hands. "Now sir, you shall be fed by both of us until you will never want to eat again—but, do we get a ride after dinner, Sir Knight?"

"You do—all three of us on one seat, so I can hug two charming girls at one time. Where shall we go?" inquired Villard, who had no choice of routes.

"I—I'm afraid to suggest," faltered Winifred, guiltily.

"Of course I'm no mind reader, dear girl——"

"I hardly know so well about that. It seems to me that you really do know my mind?" laughed Winifred.

"For example?"

"Don't you remember? Over at Dreamy Hollow—how you anticipated everything that would

add to my comfort and ease of mind? If I was the least bit thirsty you rang a bell and in came the water without a hint from me. All I had to do was to think of something I'd like for dinner, and there it was, when it came time to be served. I am somewhat like the slaves of olden days who thought as did their master," teased the girl. "Now I'm going to prove all I've said. I'll write my wishes down as to where we shall go, and I'll fold it and hand it to you."

Over to her desk ran Winifred, where she rapidly set down her choice, then gave it into the keeping of Julie.

"Now sir—please state your own choice of a drive," said the girl, gaily.

"I've always wanted to visit Parkins' hut," said he, yawning after the fashion of one who desires to hide his curiosity concerning a certain particular thing.

Simultaneously the two girls broke out in laughter, as Julie passed over Winifred's scribbled line—"The Parkins Castle on the Outer Drive." She had once seen the hut and with girlish curiosity wanted to see it again.

"Now then—see how you control my very

thoughts!" laughed Winifred running over to him and patting his cheek. "Now 'sposing you were a wicked king, just imagine what a living death I would lead!" she ended, her voice deeply sepulchral as her girlish voice could command.

And so the plan took immediate effect by way of starting out. As they quickly passed through the deserted business quarter, the question arose as to which turn to take for the outer drive, but an inquiry brought them the right information.

"Wouldn't it be terrible if we'd find him there," suggested Winifred snuggling more closely to Villard and clutching his arm.

"Nothing like that can happen. He is occupied elsewhere," replied Villard, his teeth set and his voice cold.

After that the ride continued in silence until the outer drive came within view. Then with delight the two girls grew interested in the great billows that came rolling in from the ocean, almost forgetting the objective hut that had held their thought. But it came to view most quickly thereafter. Unpainted and weather beaten, it stood alone without tree or shrub to lend it hospitable appearance. Just a shack—nothing else

—a bedroom, plainly furnished, and in order, also a kitchenette, and a bath tub with shower. Several empty barrels outside told of the fresh water supply, hauled in, no doubt, from nearby wells, inside the bay district. Evidently the owner liked music, as a banjo-guitar stood in one corner of the room. Also there had been a dog about the premises, accounted for by a muzzle and chain, and a collar to which was attached a state license. In a crude desk there were various papers and letters, some with envelopes addressed by feminine hands. All these Villard made into a bundle, and wrapped them with an old newspaper.

"I'll turn them over to Updyke," said he to Winifred, as she looked on. "They might be valuable—some time," he mumbled as if to himself. Then suddenly he almost shouted—"Let us get away from this infamous den!" as he opened the door for the two girls to pass out. Then he slammed it behind him and walked to the car without looking back.

A month went by before anything of importance broke in upon the even tenor of Villard's daily life. The Parkins matter had waned into

a memory and Updyke held his peace as to the whereabouts of the man. Then, suddenly, as a bolt from the sky, the engagement of Winifred Barbour of Patchogue and George Carver of Riverhead was announced in the local papers of that thriving little city. From the moment Villard learned of it he settled back into the life of a recluse. He had lost his battle in the dearest cause of his life. He became old and worn over night, such had been the inexorable reaction from his mighty love for the girl of his heart. Only Updyke and Sawyer could gain access to his seclusion. Gray patches of hair made quick attack upon the dark brown, and no longer caring for his general appearance, gray whiskers and a stubby mustache were allowed to grow at random. The change was most radical, but not without distinction. After all it was Villard who wore them.

From the day he read the item concerning the engagement Villard refused the newspapers and all reading matter. Even letters, addressed personally to him at Dreamy Hollow, were allowed to lay unopened. And there was one from Winifred, in which she had bared her soul in explana-

tion, declaring her undying allegiance, as might a daughter and a comforter—but not as a wife. The envelope remained unbroken, as merely one of the heap that grew day by day. Nothing mattered—Villard's world stood still.

In one paragraph Winifred had written an explanation of her motives, and she prayed for an answer from the depths of her heart. It read—

Dear Friend:—These things I would have you stop and consider, not lightly, because of your love for me. I am not of your station in life—and I would not drag you down to mine. Just imagine the harm that would come of it—a blight on your life, that you could never live down. Oh, my dearest friend on earth, how would either of us regard the other once we were confronted by the mirror of public opinion? So, with eyes open wide to the consequences of wedlock with you, I am about to consecrate my life to a plain, simple man, without riches or deep learning—one of my own station in life, who will never have cause to rue the day he takes me to wed. It is all for the best, dear friend. Just allow your big, generous heart to feel that my intentions are for your good, and also my own. There have been precious moments in our lives which I shall never forget—nor shall I deny, even to the man I shall marry—that you were the first to inspire my heart with a knowledge of what a sacred emotion love should be.

And that was the letter in full, all save the signature—one word—Winifred.

Had Villard opened it upon its arrival, his greatness of heart would have asserted itself forthwith. But gaining first information from a newspaper clipping was quite another matter. It rankled in his bosom. Big, manly fellow that he was, ordinarily he would have stopped to think how innocently such things could happen. Winifred's letter had been mailed two days before the article appeared, but it had been delayed in transit. On time, it would have given Villard opportunity to support his own cause, but fate plays in all games, either of heart or of brain. To a girl of her mould wealth had no standing when measured by love.

Time flew by as the wedding day drew near. But there came no word from Villard. Henry Updyke looked in on Winifred's little home one day and found the girl crying. Few women are they who may heighten their beauty through tears, but Winifred's face was that of a grieving Madonna. She ran to him at once, as a child to its father and wound her arms about his neck.

And there she remained as she sobbed out her story.

"But you love this young man, don't you?" soothed the big fellow whose face looked drawn and old, as his heart went out to the girl.

"I don't know," sobbed Winifred.

"Do you love Drury Villard?"

"Oh, fondly, sir, but he is far above me! I would ruin his life—and after all his kindness to my father and myself, I can't bear to think of it."

"Well, now, little woman, just sit down in that big rocking chair and let me talk to you like an uncle who had your interest at heart. Villard is a sick man, and he hadn't opened your letter when I called upon him two weeks ago. There were many more and all of them more or less important. Yours was among them, and to oblige him I read all his mail."

"My letter, too!" blushed the girl—"and it was sacred—I meant it so."

"Yes, and it is still sacred, but now he knows its contents—and he might never have known had I not done a little secretarial work for him that day. He had ordered his mail to be thrown in the fire, but I was consulted, arriving as I did

at the right moment. In due course I read your letter, and I sincerely compliment you upon your good sense. I count you as one of my friends, for I know you have nothing against me, so we may be quite confidential, I hope."

"Indeed we may, sir," assented Winifred in a very weak little voice.

"Mr. Villard trusts me, Mr. Sawyer trusts me, and hundreds of the best-known people in New York trust me. Now I want you to understand that every word I say is truth. I make my living by telling the truth, but in many cases it does not come to light. Now then, listen carefully —Mr. Villard is one of God's noblemen!"

"Oh, I know he is, Mr. Updyke!" assented Winifred.

"He loved a girl named Winifred many years ago——"

"Yes, I know that—too. She warned me of the accident, but in my eagerness to see New York I said little about it. But I did tell Mr. Villard, after I came to know him."

"He hears from her, from time to time—or thinks he does—it's all the same," said Updyke. "She warned him of Parkins, but trustful man

that he was, he wouldn't believe. Now he knows the truth—but to get back to my point, I want to say, in justice to all parties, that you should *not* marry Villard. Not that he isn't worthy—far from that, there is no one more so—but his heart is with the dead! As his wife you would become to him the shrine of his dead love's soul!—and he would worship you as such. Would you be satisfied with just that, little girl?" queried the big fellow.

Updyke watched the varying emotions of the girl as she struggled to understand. It was all so deep and mysterious, even though she had beliefs of her own like the one he had explained.

"Allow me to answer the question for you," prompted Updyke, gazing deep into her eyes. "There are as many beliefs on the subject of the hereafter as there are grief-stricken people. Every person who pretends to know about the life to come is to that extent insane. In fact there is no such thing as complete sanity. The ninety and nine are divided into that same number of personal and deviating beliefs, and the one-hundredth—has no belief whatever."

Winifred's eyes had begun to open wide, as if

to testify in behalf of her own hereafter, but Updyke raised his hand for a new beginning.

"I know what you are going to tell me—your own belief—eh? But what is the use? It is but yours after all, and though it might satisfy you it might not meet my views. But I am glad you have a belief, little woman. We must all have something to lean upon or what would be the use of a temporary life, and nothing to hope for in the future? I want you to believe that which will comfort your soul and keep it good. And you must never allow any one to shake that belief—'for therein is the power and the glory forever—Amen'!"

Updyke's voice betokened a depth of feeling that Winifred had never before witnessed in his conservation. He had joked and teased, but now he talked in a way that convinced her of his superior mental equipment.

"Your words comfort me, and I shall always think of that dear good man at Dreamy Hollow with reverence for his constancy," she sighed. "Were it fair to either of us I would gladly share his love with the other Winifred, but something tells me that my youth must not be shadowed by

brooding thoughts. I must have individuality of my own," faltered Winifred, her eyes haunted by strange lights of mingled fear and compassion.

"Then marry the young man. It is simply in justice to you and George Carver that I say it. I have never known a more upright man in my life. He has the heart of a lion—you know that yourself, for you saw him in action as he carried out my instructions to the letter. And——"

"Your instructions!—I don't understand, Mr. Updyke. Please explain," demanded the astonished girl.

"It was a slip of the tongue, but there is no harm done. You are soon to be one of our family, so perhaps I'd better tell you something about George," said he, laughingly. "He belongs to the greatest law and order association in America, perhaps the world. It spreads to wherever our flag flies and is truly the backbone of the nation. As members of the association each man is carefully chosen and sworn in, but not as an officer of the law, but rather as an upholder of our government. Most of them are given official standing by being sworn in as

deputy sheriffs, clerks of courts, and so on. George is a deputy sheriff, and that is why he came to your rescue. As soon as you were kidnapped my office sent out an alarm that spread all over Long Island. It wasn't possible for Parkins to escape in my district," concluded the big fellow as he arose to go.

"Then you are a—a——"

"Sleuth?—No, never!—I just keep bad eggs from getting into the cake," laughed Updyke—and then very soberly, he reached out his huge hand to the little girl in front of him, and she grasped it eagerly. She tried to squeeze it, but it was too big and too gnarled—it couldn't be squeezed—ah, but how it might squeeze was Winifred's thought, as she followed him out to the gate.

"Would you mind if I asked one more question?" queried Winifred, her cheeks turning red from the wave of diffidence that crept into her heart.

"Bless you, no—go on," said Updyke, invitingly.

"I am haunted with fear—where is this man Parkins?"

"You will never hear of him again; rest your mind on that score. He is alive—somewhere. Nobody knows but me," he laughed, as he jumped in his car.

And then she stood at the gate and watched with awe the big man's machine as it faded in the distance, but when it turned west he raised his hand, and she answered by waving her own.

CHAPTER XIV.

GEORGE CARVER'S BRIDE

THE day that Winifred Barbour was married to George Carver was as beautiful as a day might be. The ceremony was performed in her own little home and was followed by a reception that lasted on toward the evening. Every gay gown in Patchogue had its chance for an airing on that gala day, but when evening shadows began to fall, the church bell rang, and every man and woman, to say nothing of the children, betook themselves to the church. A monster wedding supper, the inspiration of the townspeople acting in one accord, had been spread, and none would be denied admission.

It was Winifred's hour of triumph over her young lord and master, who, while subject to congratulations, came in for small glory. The fact that he was soon to depart with his bride for their new home in Riverhead failed to develop any medals for him.

"Why don't you quit that dead county seat town and stay here among us 'ristocrats," demanded Old Man Carmichel, gruffly, by way of gleaming daggers—then bursting out in wild guffaws, "Jes'ta take the feller off'n his feet."

But Carver had seen many such in his bright young life, and he likened them to the usual village "Jester," who started that way and kept it going to the end of his days. Nevertheless, it was Carver's night to be affable so he grinned quite good naturedly as he awaited the arrival of Henry Updyke and his big touring car. It was the one privilege the big fellow had demanded, since he could not attend the wedding —to see the bride safely to the door of her new home. And he had his reason for that, aside from its pleasure, for the event had been attended by much advance publicity, far greater than the prominence of the happy girl would ordinarily entitle her.

The New York papers gave mention of the forthcoming wedding in their last Sunday editions, and on the following Sabbath the "write ups" would be much extended, with a picture of the bride in the magazine sections.

Mary Johnson, Updyke's assistant, had seen to all that by personally making the rounds of Newspaper Row. A camera man, as if dropped from the clouds, seemed somewhat officious to the townspeople of Patchogue, when he posed the young couple on the steps of the church. Just how a young fellow with tripod and camera could halt with his hand a great host of people, and sweep them this way and that until they posed artistically about the bride and groom, was something to ponder on. In the doing of this there was some rivalry by way of holding one's own in "the limelight," but the camera was newfangled, and it revolved either way sufficiently to take in the most prominent of those in the wake of the bride– and much to the mystification of more than one person. It was Old Man Carmichel's turn to again become facetious.

"I'll be switched if I c'n see how they take pitchers with a contraption that won't stay put," said he, his eyes showing his mystification. "It must be broke, or somethin'."

"It's a movin' pitcher kodak—ain't you ever seen 'um before?" queried the man beside him.

"Yeh—I've seen 'um twicet as big," said Car-

michel moving within range of the strange machine.

After depositing the Carvers at their new home Updyke refused the invitation to alight, but Winifred, the bride, would not have it so, and she caught up one of his big hands and called to her husband to help her.

"Just think, after all of the trouble I have caused you, now you refuse to take a little bit more, to see how George has busied himself of late," she pouted, playfully. "You've just got to or I'll jump up and kiss you before everybody passing by."

"Well, I don't want Mary's nose to get out of joint," said the big fellow, clambering down to the pavement.

"Mary!—Mary who?" she demanded, as with her husband on one side and herself on the other, they dragged him into the new cottage. There, with one poke of Carver's forefinger he touched a master button which set every light globe going from cellar to roof.

In the excitement of entering her new home for the first time, Winifred forgot the word "Mary" for quite a long time. The little place

was yet to be furnished, and that was "Winifred's job," according to Carver, and meanwhile they would "put up" at "The White House," only a few blocks away. George's plans had been splendid, far better than she could have figured out for herself.

"What shall we call it?" she cried, enthusiastically. "Think up a good name for our new home, Mr. Updyke."

"The Gambler's Paradise," he replied soberly.

"You horrid thing—how could you think of such a name!" scolded Winifred.

"Well—didn't George take a big gamble when he waylaid Parkins? He might have been shot, you know."

"Oh, my darling George, come here and let me kiss you!" she demanded. "Wasn't he brave, Mr. Updyke?"

"All gamblers are brave as long as——"

"Now you stop teasing me, sir—make him stop George!" she urged, her face wreathed in smiles. "Just give me a name for our home—and be quick about it."

"Parkins' Waterloo," replied Updyke, his eyes filled with the Old Nick.

"Now George, you come forward and make this man behave," she demanded—"or shall I pull his hair?"

Then remembering something she had forgotten Winifred exclaimed—

"Tell me about Mary—who is she?"

"My right hand man," replied Updyke soberly.

"A man named Mary?—Oh!"

"Well she is more than a man—she's a woman with a level head, who runs my business and knows more about it than I do," replied Updyke without further indication of his attitude toward her.

"Then you'd better marry her at once or some one will come along and steal her, too!" warned the bride.

"If they do they'll have to take a chance they might regret. Mary is an officer of the law and amply able to protect herself," said the big fellow, knowingly.

"George Carver—look at this man! I declare, with all my feminine intuitions, that he is in love!"

Laughter, always a tonic, brought the red to

Updyke's face when he saw that he had stumbled into the wrong kind of joking.

"He doesn't deny it, George. See that heightened color in his cheeks?" teased Winifred, her eyes sparkling.

"Well—I own up—just between the three of us, and to go no further," Updyke replied. "I haven't asked her yet."

"Then how do you know she will have you?" demanded Winifred, biting her lower lip in order to look solemn.

"The Updyke System will reach out and gather her in one of these days, when I get my courage to the boiling point," replied the big fellow, chuckling.

"Then you must start practicing at once," commanded Mrs. Carver, with the air of a matron of long time experience. "I want to go along when she shops for her trousseau. I've yet to see your little old New York," said she, dreamily, as memories came back to her mind.

"Come—jump in and I'll drive you over to 'The White House,' " ordered Updyke, noting her thoughtful attitude. "It's getting late for young married couples to be caught on the streets.

There is a curfew law in Riverhead for brides and grooms. Seven thirty, and then the law swoops down!"

And when the happy pair were landed in front of the white painted hotel the big fellow whispered hoarsely—

"I'm going to bring Mary out to see you when you get settled. We'll come some Saturday, and you act as chaperon for a night. Next day we will run over to New York for a whole week while you help do her shopping. That's a go —eh—George?"

"Indeed it is," laughed Winifred, assuming command of the new ship of state. "But wouldn't it be wise to wait and see if she will have you?"

"By George, you're right; I hadn't thought of that. I'll ring her up the moment I get to my hotel," replied Updyke.

"Why not use long distance?" suggested Winifred. "Then George can stand near and coach you. I assure you he is good at it."

"Not much!" exploded Updyke, as he set the starter going. "When I tell Mary, there will be no freshly married people around."

As the long nosed roadster threaded its way along Main Street the Carvers stood watching until its red tail lights faded from view. Thus the happiest day of their lives had merged into night.

On reaching the second floor of The White House, the bride enquired about the hour.

"Just seven twenty-eight," replied Carver, consulting his watch.

"Then 'curfew shall not ring to-night,' as we have two minutes to spare," laughed the bride, closing the door softly behind them.

On reaching New York Updyke immediately rang up the home where Mary Johnson lived and "switchboard" promptly responded.

"Updyke calling," said he, gruffly.

"Miss Johnson is waiting to hear from you —something important I believe," said the girl, who always watched out for his interests.

"Put her on, Miss Daisy," said Updyke, "and don't listen in," he warned, as one who knew about her girl-like curiosity. "This you, Miss Johnson—how's everything?"

"Bad news from South Bay," said she, meaning Dreamy Hollow. "News from Patchogue

caused a severe spell of anesthesia. Doctor Benton is staying there over night—also Mr. Sawyer."

"Does he recognize them?"

"They do not know, but think it doubtful. At one time he said—'tell Parkins'—and at another, some hours later, he mumbled incoherently about 'the church' being 'too crowded.' 'I've been puzzled over the words 'tell Parkins'—what do you make of that?" queried the secretary.

"Nothing important," replied Updyke—"just vagaries of the mind. He'll get over it in a day or two. Perhaps his words 'the church' signified a hazy recollection of the wedding held there to-day. The camera man shot a lot of pictures. Better hold on to some of the proofs for the gallery," laughed Updyke.

"The Updyke gallery?—never! You may have one for your private office," said the secretary, after a pause.

"Old stingy—always keeping down expenses, eh? Proofs only cost a dollar apiece—good ones, I mean. Spoils, only a quarter. I presume I'll get one of the spoils," laughed the big fellow.

"If you talk that way, I'll keep all of them,"

bantered Mary Johnson. "Where are they now?"

"What—the pictures?"

"No—the happy couple?"

"Asleep—I guess," replied Updyke, blandly.

"You are quite impossible, after your long ride all by yourself. I believe you are jealous of George."

"No, you are wrong, Mary. It's not him, much as I admire his wife."

"Who else could it be?" giggled Mary

"Now you are asking questions! What is the name of the photographer you sent out to Patchogue?"

"Oh, a queer sort of name!—Pelletier, or something. He does all our work, and for most of the newspapers. I had him go out personally, instead of sending some horrid assistant."

"Well, he is the man who excites my jealousy," said Updyke, sharply.

"Impossible! I didn't know you were acquainted," replied Mary Johnson, in a surprised tone.

"Nevertheless it's him," replied the big fellow, in a positive tone of voice.

"What reason have you to be jealous of that little simp?" laughed the secretary.

"Well, he kept saying she wants this, and she wants that, and she wants one taken on the steps of the church, and one as they get into the automobile, and so on," replied Updyke.

"Why did that disturb you?"

"I found out who the *She* was that he talked of so glibly."

"Who was she?" persisted Mary Johnson.

"Why—can't you guess, after all the hints I've made?"

"No, I'm still in the dark."

"He meant *you,* of course, and he seemed so familiar. Knew precisely what you wanted, and aired himself importantly," growled the big fellow.

"But what had that to do with you, I wonder? You left the matter in my hands."

"Quite so, my dear, and that's what makes me jealous. The fellow talked so much about you I feared there must be a strong attachment, or——"

"Now that will be quite enough!" said Mary

Johnson, as if offended. "I think it's time to——"

"No, Mary don't do that. I'm in real deadly earnest about—you know what I mean—now don't you?" appealed the big fellow.

"It begins to dawn on me. After this long conversation I feel that I have been unusually dense. Your moonlight ride all by yourself must have gone to your head," giggled the secretary.

"Nevertheless I mean every word I have said, Mary. I want you—I must have you, Mary," said Updyke, a note of strong appeal in his voice. "I've known it a long time but I could not make myself believe that I had a chance. You are so young and pretty, and I am so old and ugly, and——"

"Why you are not old at forty-one!" exclaimed Mary Johnson, forgetting that she was listening to an avowal. "And as for being ugly, I'd say that your rugged face denotes character, which is far more worthwhile than being good looking. But why do you tell me all this over the telephone? Weren't you brave enough to say it to my face?"

"No, coward that I am—I just couldn't,"

sighed Updyke so loudly that Mary Johnson heard it over the wire.

Then came a pause, a very long one, each expecting the next word to come from the other. Finally, the softly modulated voice of Mary Johnson came into the Updyke ear.

"Why not call with your car to-morrow evening, then we can talk more freely," she suggested. "Am I never to ride in that big machine?"

"I always knew you were the brains of the business, Mary. It's no wonder that——"

"Don't say it over the wire," warned Mary. "I'd rather hear it more directly."

"Then be ready at seven, my——"

"Never mind—careful what you say—some one listening in," said she as both heard the guilty click of the switchboard. "Au revoir—I'll be ready at seven, but I will not go to the office to-morrow."

"No—and when Miss Carew returns, you will come and go as you please," said he, as she answered "Good night."

Then the big fellow hung up the receiver.

With mind filled with happy thoughts, Henry

Updyke, fatigued by eighteen hours of constant activity, turned doggedly back to the telephone and asked connection with Dreamy Hollow, Villard's strange condition gave him a queer feeling of unrest. The big fellow felt that he had experienced more kinds of ups and downs during the past few months than for any period of his life. With joy on one lobe of his brain and dread on the other, he found himself halting between going ahead or going to bed. But the long tingle of the phone bell brought him back to attention, as Mrs. Bond's voice came over the wire.

"How's Mr. Villard?" he inquired.

"About the same, sir. His mind is just as it has been since——"

"Yes, I am fearful of the consequences. Any change in his actions?"

"About the same. He lives with the stars, and has no word for any of us—just oblivious to everything about him. Two specialists from the city were here to-day with Dr. Benton. Something about lesions that interfere with the brain," answered Mrs. Bond.

"Any talk of an operation?"

"I believe so, but the doctors are not agreed. Doctor Benton declares that no operation will take place with his consent. If outvoted, he says that he will turn the case over and quit. That would be terrible, wouldn't it?"

"Yes—more than that, it would be sinful. I'll give him a ring on the phone to-morrow. Lesions practically mean incipient paresis, and sometimes lobes form that are even more dangerous. Without criticising the life he leads, which is sedentary, Mr. Villard could have saved himself from the dreadful state he is in. An active, out-of-door life for a man of his build was positively necessary. And he should never have given up his daily habit of attending to business. It is the soft life that kills," concluded Updyke vehemently.

"I know you are right. Fat people like me have to keep going and continually diet, or they fall suddenly never to rise again," replied the housekeeper.

"How about his mail? More of it coming in?"

"Yes, great heaps of letters. You never saw the like."

"I'll have them delivered to his town office,

hereafter," said Updyke. "I can't spare the time to run down there to read them. I'm too busy just now."

"Very well, Mr. Updyke, good night, sir," said Mrs. Bond, and with that off his mind the big fellow turned in for the night.

CHAPTER XV.

PARKINS RUNS AMUCK

FORTUNATELY Henry Updyke was no slave to his nerves. He could fall into slumber as his head touched the pillow, and six hours later roll out for the day. Just approaching the middle-age period, sleep meant nothing to a man of his bulk. So on this night of all nights the big fellow bolstered himself and concentrated his thoughts on the girl of his heart. He was glad that she had a mind of her own, and, on the other hand, could take advice—yet needing little. Many times he had told her to attend certain matters, to find that she had anticipated his wishes. Another thing, most pleasant to reflect upon, was that no episode of the Parkins variety had entered her life, and "By the Great Horn Spoon"—which was his most violent expletive—"there never would be!"

The thought of Parkins had a tingling effect upon Updyke, as he brought to mind a certain

far-away monastery, hid away amid the timberlands, one hundred miles northwest of Quebec. There the padrone system still flourished under the ban of a French-Canadian lumber company, and Parkins had become one of the lumber jack gang. Three years was his "sign up," after a stormy session with the big boss to whom he had been consigned by a Montreal employment bureau. To attempt an escape was to die by starvation, or wild beasts, or woodticks, it mattered not which. But the Parkins brain was not so far scrambled that he could not work himself into the good offices of the boss of the gang. He first helped the paymaster, and kept up the records. Then the paymaster took sick and Parkins became head of the accounting, for which a rude shack answered the needs of protection—at the same time, a roof for his head.

All these details of the Parkins' entourage came through on reports from Updyke's Quebec agents. Invariably, on answering, the New York office warned against too much freedom of action, for Parkins was resourceful, and might effect an escape. All this was poopoohed by the big boss at the lumber-jack camp. Just to show

his confidence in Parkins he sent him to Quebec with an order for gold coin, to relieve the priests of the region, whose needs were urgent after the winter's deep snows. The scrip of the company had fallen far below par, which caused a dull roar among the thrifty tree choppers.

Long days of hard travel brought Parkins once more to the civilization of a big city, and he reveled in it. His long suffering thirst quickly turned his feet toward the hotel barroom where, with his escort, tumbler after tumbler of Scotch and soda were consumed. But Parkins was wary. He poured out large portions for his companion, but small drinks for himself. Then later, a hotel porter helped the drunken man to bed.

With his escort out of the way, Parkins hastened to the bank with the check calling for gold. The bulk of it almost filled the satchel he carried.

And now was his chance to escape on the night boat for Montreal, there to connect with railway transportation to New York. His beard and mustache of a few weeks' growth now needed a trim, as he decided to continue wearing them. At Montreal these matters were attended

to, likewise the purchase of several suits of English cut, and a bag of the tourist variety, which held much, and could be plastered with foreign labels of his own selection. All this he had done during his one day in the city, and his tickets were purchased for gay old New York. From that time on he haunted the hotel bar and filled himself to the brim. As his train crept slowly out of the Montreal station in the late afternoon, Parkins' one fear was of the U. S. revenue officers across the border, who might search his bag and seize the six bottles hidden among its contents. But one flask was kept in his overcoat pocket and long before midnight its contents were gone.

Along in early hours of the following morning, about the usual time for the bath and shower, Updyke in New York heard a rap on his door. A telegram was slipped under it, as the big fellow tumbled out to see who was there. He picked up the message, and as he tore off the envelope, his mind reverted to the night of all nights that would follow this day. For that reason he eyed the yellow sheet with apprehension. It was from

his Montreal Agency, and as he read its contents Updyke's eyes blazed with fury.

"Man with new growth black beard and mustache boarded New York Central train one thirty this afternoon stop arrived on night boat from Quebec stop bought new outfit clothes stop also large english bag and foreign labels stop had whiskers and mustache trimmed Van Dyck at Queens hotel stop paid all bills in canadian gold stop changed five hundred in gold into american bank notes stop think he is your man act quick stop signed Updyke Agency."

Updyke threw on a dressing gown and methodically started the ball to rolling. His night man was just on the point of turning the office over to the day manager when the voice of the boss came through. Jackson, the night manager, answered the call and was given some quick instructions.

"Is Bloss there yet?" Updyke asked, sharply.

"Yes—just getting ready to leave."

"Give him a wire so he can listen in—also a stenographer."

"All set," said Jackson.

"Parkins has escaped unless I am badly mistaken. Listen to this telegram from Montreal"

—then followed the contents of the message in a voice of staccato precision.

"Now, go to it. No doubt about this fellow being Parkins, is there?"

"Not here," answered Bloss receiving a nod from Jackson.

"You're not going to fall down on this, boys. I'm confident of that. Don't tip it to the police until you hear from me. We may have to stall him for he would be a fool to walk into Grand Central—but cover it just the same. That train makes a stop at Buffalo, Syracuse, Rochester, Albany—and sometimes at Yonkers. Use long distance, on all those cities as he may stop off and change to Pullmans attached to trains from the west. Miss Johnson was to be absent to-day but I think I'll call her anyhow. Then she will know what is going on. So long—don't get rattled—keep your noodles working—and get this man! I'll be down soon," growled the big fellow, as he hung up the receiver and set the shower going.

A little later on Mary Johnson, with a smile of anticipation, answered a ring from the telephone bell. She was sure it was Updyke, and

with a laugh at his nerve for rousing her out of bed on her first day off, she finally answered the call.

"I just knew it was you," said she—"now, what about my beauty sleep!" she exclaimed, with a laugh. "I wanted to look pretty to-night."

"Everything is off for to-night," replied Updyke, manlike, not stopping to think how jarring were the words he had spoken.

Mary Johnson, unnerved, awaiting further explanation.

"Did you get that?" he asked, with equal abruptness.

"Oh, quite so!—my little dream won't come true," said she, in a queer small voice that brought Updyke back to earth in a hurry.

"Well, my dear little Mary, there is a big hustle on in our office this morning and I want you to come down. Parkins has escaped and is headed this way—due this morning. The night and day managers are both on for the day, and I need *you*," said Updyke, in gentle voice.

"I'll be down in an hour, dear big man, and will stay until we get him," replied Mary with her usual workaday emphasis. "Good-bye, dear,

don't worry—we will run him down before night."

And so began a careful and constant search for a man who looked like Parkins until the Updyke Agency was all out of breath. Also every soul in it worn to a frazzle. But Mary Johnson failed to show a single sign of the weariness she must have felt, as with bright eyes and alert brain she steadied the forces about her. George Carver, using every Ranger on Long Island, invaded all places that offered concealment. The hut, on the outer drive, was to be watched day and night and the old home of Winifred at Patchogue had a guard inside its door. Dreamy Hollow and the Sawyer home were also included as a zone to be protected, although the reasons given seemed far-fetched and foolish.

"You never can tell," bellowed Updyke, by phone, as he warned Mrs. Bond that eternal vigilance was the price of safety, when a demented brain roamed at large.

"But I can't get to Mr. Villard," she urged as a reason for not doing more in the way of safeguarding the premises.

"Then tell Santzi I say to watch out for Mr. Villard's safety," answered Updyke—"and use Jacques on the early watch. If necessary Jerry can drive an automobile but he would not make a good night watchman."

"Very well, Mr. Updyke, I'll do as you say," said Mrs. Bond—"but for the life of me I don't see why he would want to harm Mr. Villard."

"I'll give one reason that will suffice—he thinks Mr. Villard caused him to lose Winifred Barbour."

"Well, of all the fools!" exclaimed the housekeeper.

"He may have been pretty near right, Mrs. Bond."

"Well I never was more surprised than right now," she replied.

"Good night, and don't worry," answered the big fellow. "Just keep your eyes open and call me up even if it is but a single thought that you think might have a bearing upon the case."

From that moment Mrs. Bond became a silent watcher over every circumstance that connected itself with the master of Dreamy Hollow—but a week passed by and all was serene. It must have

been some one other than Parkins that wore the black beard and mustache.

"Well, Mary," said Updyke one day, as evening drew near, "I'm ready to give that little us-two party. Shall we go as we are, or shall we make it to-morrow night?"

"To-morrow night, dear—I want to look pretty when you continue that proposal," she teased. "Or is that withdrawn?"

"That will never happen, little lady. You be ready when I drive up at seven-thirty sharp to-morrow evening. After we take a little spin we will drop back to the Swathmere and dine on the roof."

"Oh, that will be tremendous!" exclaimed the delighted Miss Johnson, as she withdrew her hand from the grip of her big fellow.

An hour later, as she sat in her cozy room building air castles instead of reading the book that she held in her hand, the telephone rang, and the castles all tumbled as she answered the call.

"Am leaving for Dreamy Hollow—want to go along? It is a lovely night—moon and all that—love to have you—back in three or four hours."

"No sir!—to-morrow night—I must look my best—so early to bed for me. But Henry, do be careful. What is the trouble down there?" she asked in her most professional tone of voice.

"Oh, he wants me to come! and this is the first time since—you know what I mean," he concluded.

"Take my advice, and have one of the men along," continued the girl. "I'd feel easier, Henry."

"Very well, I'll do it to please you."

And that was the last word she heard from him until the next day at noon.

When Updyke reached Dreamy Hollow everything was in turmoil. Parkins had been there and the master lay in a comatose condition, and perhaps dying.

At seven o'clock Jacques, the chauffeur, carried a tray of light food to his master who now ate alone in his private office. An hour later he would return for the tray, which had become the nightly habit. As Jacques opened the door, on his return for the tray the muzzle of a revolver was shoved in his face.

"Hands up!" whispered a man with a mask

over his nose and forehead, a growth of black whiskers concealing the rest of his face.

Frightened beyond ability to shout the servant held up his hands, and was gagged in a jiffy and his hands tied behind his back. At the point of a revolver he was motioned to lie down on the deep cushioned lounge, and by the look of the man who held the weapon, he was convinced that he must obey or be killed.

Villard, abstracted, had not even looked up from the desk where his eyes searched a document. Apparently he had been oblivious to the almost noiseless hold-up within forty feet from where he sat, his back being turned toward the great empty space over which the intruder had walked to a chair by his side. The next thing he knew he was looking into the muzzle of a revolver, with silencer attachment. That was enough. He didn't care to look at the person who held it. But in a carefully modulated voice he said—

"I am a very sick man. I'm given up to die by the doctors. I am putting my affairs in order," he concluded, but without seeming interest in how his words had been taken.

"Do you know who I am?" demanded the man, his voice husky with passion.

"Yes, William, I know you," replied Villard wearily, as the boy Jacques, alarmed, listened to the conversation.

"I've come to square accounts with you, Drury Villard. I'm a desperate character and I don't care what happens," said Parkins tearing the mask from his face. "You drove me into slavery, and all because you loved my sweetheart. You coveted my woman and you tore her from me by the use of your hirelings. You bought up the law by using Updyke's crooked bunch of highwaymen. He sicked Carver onto me, who tore my Winifred away—then your soulless lieutenant put me through a hell of mental torture—and that's what I am going to do to you!"

"Very well, William—since you have assumed to judge me by the action of another. You seized Winifred in an illegal manner. I owed the girl a certain hospitality, since I rescued her, and took her into my home where she was nursed back to life," said Villard, in a very even tone of voice.

"You rescued her!—you mean, that because

she struck your fancy you gathered her up and took her into your home and tried to win her love!" shouted Parkins, not caring who heard him. "Now I want to know what you've done with her—if she is on these premises, produce her!

"I am unable to do that."

"Then you refuse?"

"She isn't here—she hasn't been here since she went back to Patchogue."

"Is she there now?"

"No."

"Where is she—speak up Villard! I am in a dangerous mood."

"I refuse to answer," replied the old time friend and employer of Parkins.

"I'll give you one minute, and if you have not answered by that time I shall give you a 'third degree' with the butt of this gun."

All during the time that Parkins held his watch in hand Villard sat motionless and without protest. A minute seems long when one counts the slow seconds, but short, indeed, when one gives no heed.

"Last call—one—two—three—that's the way

your Updyke man counted the seconds for me — four — five — six — seven — eight — nine —ten—time's up—here goes," and with that Parkins, his eyes staring, jumped to his feet and struck Villard on the back of his head in the manner he had warned.

Knocked senseless, the victim would have fallen to the floor, but his persecutor was not through with him. Jacques groaned piteously, as, helpless, he heard the blow fall, and felt sure that the master was killed.

"Shut up, you vassal, over there!" shouted Parkins, now frenzied as he chafed Villard's hands and stretched out his arms. Not effecting results, he bent the limp body over the desk and pushed the chair closely up to it. Then he ran to the tray that Jacques had put on the floor, and seized the glass of water that stood on it. This he dashed into Villard's face and slowly the huge body responded. A minute went by before he opened his eyes and tried to stagger to his feet, but Parkins, remorseless, shoved him back in the chair.

"Wake up and talk—where is she?"

Only a moaning sound gave answer.

"You old cradle robber, why don't you speak up in defense of yourself. It was all right for *you* to love her, but for *me* it was a crime! I always treated her right, until you put false notions in her head. When I finally rose out of a sick bed and got her back into my care, where she belonged, your big Wall Street hireling set his dogs loose and they finally ran me down."

"I'll go to my bed," said Villard, trying to rise from his seat.

"You'll stay where you are and die in that chair if you make a move to leave it! Where is the girl you stole!" he shouted, his eyes flaming with hate.

At that moment the far door opened and the faces of Santzi and Jerry came into view. One glance, and they yelled as if stricken with nightmare, then ran out and shouted to the watchman.

By the time they returned Parkins had flown.

Villard, however, now lying full length upon the floor, was in need of quick attention. Dr. Sawyer was sent for, and Dr. Benton was phoned. Pending their arrival the master was picked up and carried to the couch where Jacques had laid helpless as he listened to Parkins' cruel

words. When his master fell to the floor, he rolled off and groaned.

And it was just at this time that Updyke rolled in, without knowledge of the terrible tragedy that had been enacted. When told, he thanked his stars that Mary Johnson had not joined him in his moonlight excursion. Then he thought of the leisurely run he had made and bitterly accused himself of procrastination. Ten minutes would have saved Villard from possible death, and he had "fooled" away half an hour by slow driving.

Once in action, however, the big fellow gave quick account of himself. He threw off his coat, called for ammonia, and then began to move the victim's arms and legs, and peeped at the whites of his eyes. One whiff of the bottle caused the injured man to stir, the cold water applications resulting in the definite movement of the arms and legs. Suspended animation was quickly released.

When Dr. Benton arrived Updyke looked on for a moment, and then began to collect the facts. He knew that Parkins had been the assailant from first description and now was his chance

to learn from Jacques the details of the crime, particularly of the words spoken by Parkins to Villard. Still trembling, the youngsters, assisted by Updyke, promptly gave a well-connected story of the affair, and with that to go on, the big fellow cleared the private office, and warned against interruptions while he was engaged with Long Distance.

Meanwhile, by his order, no one on the premises should leave it, nor should any one talk about the case.

"I don't want a word to leak about this," said he to Mrs. Bond. "Mr. Villard was in no way to blame for it, therefore he should not be subjected to wild rumors that would involve his good name and that of a pure young woman now happily married."

"I will talk to all of the servants and appeal to their sense of justice, for they all love the master," replied Mrs. Bond. "That we will all keep mum, you may be sure."

"And it wouldn't be a bad idea to throw a scare in along with the rest. For instance, if anything leaks out about this I'll know where it comes from in a very few hours, and that will

bring trouble for whoever is guilty. You make that strong, Mrs. Bond, for I mean every word of it," said Updyke, pointing a very large finger at the fat little housekeeper.

"I'll do the best I can," sighed Mrs. Bond.

"Well, I am sure of that, and you keep everybody on their toes until I arrange my plans. We'll sleep in relays to-night, but to-morrow I'll throw a human network around this place."

Hour upon hour the big fellow with his mouth to the phone, spread the web for the human spider that had crawled out into the black of night. Sawyer came in with news concerning Villard from time to time, but Updyke, grim and preoccupied, merely nodded his head and motioned him back to the sick man. At midnight he finally succeeded in arousing George Carver, who with his bride had been bridge-whisting all evening in a near-by home.

"I need you, George," appealed Updyke, "but you get about three hours' sleep before we talk about it. I don't want you to lose the much needed rest from now until three A. M., over something that I am going to ask you to do. I'll call you at sharp three, and at three thirty your

flivver will be in front of your hotel—good night."

"Good night, you old sleep burglar. I'll turn in at once," replied Carver—and the web was complete.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE HUT ACROSS THE BAY

It was with a grunt of relief that Updyke called Central for the last time pending the three o'clock date with Carver. This time it was a certain switchboard operator who answered him.

"Miss Johnson," said the big fellow, toning down the rasping voice that had been vibrated a thousand miles within the short space of four hours.

"I think she has retired for the night," lisped the girl in charge.

"Quit thinking and connect as directed," snapped Updyke, forgetting that his voice was in training for a certain event at the Swathmere. "You are expected to act! And say—no listening. Get that?"

The next voice he heard was that of Mary Johnson.

"It's about time you said something from

somewhere," said she, knowing that the unusual had happened.

"That fellow showed up at Dreamy Hollow to-night—you know who. Much to say to-morrow morning—no holiday dinners for us yet. Get to the office early, say, eight thirty and I'll spin the yarn."

"Big Case?"

"Getting bigger all the time."

"That little dinner, by the way—next winter—some time?"

"Not on your sweet young life! The first breathing spell."

"I was joking dear—you——"

"Of course you were, we're always joking, aren't we? As long as we joke, we won't quarrel!"

"Speaking of—you know who—did you see him?"

"No—he had done his mischief and skedaddled a few moments before I arrived. First real bad luck in a long time. Bad mess down here!"

"There is satisfaction in knowing that so and so is in the web. Will he go out to his old haunt on the outer drive?"

"In time—but not now."

"Why?"

"He would expect us to look for him there—and we will—for a much longer time than he thinks."

"Had you thought of Julie Hayes—she still runs Winifred's stand. She has sharp eyes and sharp wits. She can keep mum."

"Now that is a first-class tip. I'll put George onto that. I'm phoning him at three o'clock to wake him up. He doesn't know it yet, but I'm going to have him at the hut very early to-morrow morning. He can see Julie and put her wise."

"I believe it is the Swathmere that I'm saving up that pretty new dress for—is it not?" teased Mary Johnson.

"Exactly so, dear girl—if we ever get around to it," mourned the big fellow. "I am more anxious about that little you-and-me dinner than any other thing in life, except one—that's you!"

"It's time you got back on your job—good night!"

"So long, dear—I'll ring you at the office soon as possible to-morrow morning."

"Take a little nap—why don't you?"

"Yeah!—take a little nap!—I hardly see myself shutting my eyes on a night like this. But I might—so you go to bed yourself and get that beauty sleep."

As the phones clicked off Updyke with stubborn tenacity, lunged back into the woof of his spider web. Everything seemed well in hand. Inquiry as to Villard showed satisfactory progress. He would live, but how he would come out of it was a question for Father Time to solve. Finally he called for Santzi and told him to sit by and wake him at prompt two-forty-five, and in two minutes more from the depths of the lounge he was competing with the fog horns of South Bay.

To George Carver three o'clock was an unearthly rising hour, as many a man would willingly bear witness. But Winifred, at two-thirty, had switched on the current under the percolator, and only awaited the presence of her liege lord and master before connecting the toaster.

It was the enticing odor of the bacon and coffee, not the alarm clock's mad music, that sent the young husband under the shower.

At two-forty-five the telephone tingled, and Winifred ran forward to answer.

"Are you up?" shouted a well-known voice, in a drowsy tone.

"Can't you smell the coffee and bacon?" replied Winifred, gaily—"and the noise of that awful man under the shower? I'll tell him you're waiting. He's making more fuss than a porpoise," she concluded as she hastily snatched a bathrobe and hung it on a hook near the shower room.

"Parkins has disclosed himself and his whereabouts," were Updyke's first words, as Winifred's husband took up the receiver.

"That sounds interesting," replied Carver, with enthusiasm.

"Glad to hear you say so, and I'll add—especially so, to you!"

"Humph! Give me the details," replied Carver, who analyzed quickly.

"Listen carefully, boy, and don't get excited about anything I tell you. By all means don't repeat any part of it to Winifred that concerns herself."

"Yep—I get you—what's up?"

"The scoundrel was here at Dreamy Hollow, just after dark. I was on my way down but he had done his mischief and gone before I arrived. The scene was in so and so's office where he appeared suddenly—bound and gagged Jacques who was taking out a tray of dishes. Then slipped over to so and so and covered him with a silencer automatic."

"You don't say!"

"Yep—he demanded the whereabouts of a certain girl—accused so and so of stealing her and gave him a third degree. So and so steadfastly refused all information, giving no inkling of her marriage or address. Julie Hayes is the only one in Patchogue who knows her real address—get me?"

"Yep—go on—what happened between so and so and——"

"So and so was beaten over the head with the butt of the revolver—knocked senseless. Santzi and Jerry looked in, wondering why Jacques had not returned with the tray of dishes. Unarmed they ran to spread alarm, but the whelp had escaped on their return."

"How—only one door to the room?"

"Just one—and only two windows—north and east corners, for light on his desk. No furniture to speak of—just his big square flat-top, council table—chair, lounge, and filing cases. The scoundrel disappeared through the east window."

"What do you suggest for me to do?"

"Light out as quickly as possible for Patchogue. See Chief Mack. I couldn't reach him by phone. Had gone somewhere—not expected back until very late. I left word for him to call me, but he hasn't so far."

"Any one else?"

"See Julie Hayes—she's safe. Have her keep sharp eye out and phone me here anything she sees or learns about the scoundrel. Then you go to his hut on the outer drive—pick up a ranger at Patchogue and have him stay there day and night. Have him supplied with provisions—Julie will help him, without exposing our hand. Tell her I'll pay all bills—have them sent to me, here."

"You must feel pretty certain that he will turn up at the hut—sooner or later?" said Carver enquiringly.

"I do—and I think he is more likely to go

there by water," answered Updyke, with a ring of conviction in his voice.

"Why would he come here at all?"

"Because he has a lot of gold to conceal that he can't deposit without answering questions."

"Why?"

"It's Canadian coinage mostly, and would come under suspicion."

"Give me a reason for that," said Carver. "I'm not very well posted in such matters."

"He was sent to Quebec with the pay roll of a lumber company, up in the timber country, where I had sent him for keeps. The shyster played square and seemed so honest that they intrusted him with a check on a bank in Quebec. He kept on going, changing into American money as fast as he could without arousing suspicion. He has a lot of gold left and I think he has it cached near the hut. But he may not go near it for some time. He now wears whiskers and mustache, raven black—I'd say from description, but he is easily recognized. Jacques says Villard knew him the moment he saw him. Better write out a 'John Doe' and have it ready. I don't want his real name to come out—yet," said Updyke,

yawning loud enough to be heard at Riverhead.

"All right, Henry, I'll be on my way. I'll let you know my whereabouts from time to time. Better turn in for a three hours' nap while I'm getting to destination."

"That's just what I'll do, now that you're on the job. So long, and good luck."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WOLF HOUND'S NEW MASTER

Far famed detectives have lived in all ages, but it remained for the modern operative to enlarge the perspective. Intuition still ruled as a first qualification, but the real prime requisite changed to "knowledge of men." Not only their cunning but the whites of their eyes and the shapes of their heads. The "hatchet face" one type, the "round head" another, and the month they were born in—an important clue as to temperament. On the charts prenatal influence had much space for remarks—also the color of eyes. and the color of hair, curly or straight, the nose pug or aquiline—the mouth large or small—curved up or down.

Parkins, on the Updyke chart, registered as "low brow," meaning thick hair growing far down the forehead—no matter the color. But when considering hair, red heads warned of danger—once started, they fight. Black hair gen-

erally stood for impulsiveness and quick temper. That was the Parkins type, with hair as dark as a raven. Born in June, his stone was the agate—naturally drifting toward the "good fellow" class—the kind that need wonderful mothers to hold them in check through the days of their youth.

George Carver, now flivvering his way to Patchogue, was a brown haired "husky" with big open face that bespoke sterling character, and what is known as "horse sense." Instead of being brilliant, he was apt and quick of discernment. He could match with all types and win by his coolness. But he knew the value of getting in with the first blow. To him a run on lonesome roads meant nothing, either in daylight or darkness—he was always prepared—his intuition unerring. So when entering Patchogue he skirted the town on its farthest east line and hit the trail for the outer drive. The townspeople were just rubbing their eyes before leaving their beds when he muffled his engine and scooted across the little city. By the time he returned the stores would be open and Julie Hayes would have taken down the shutters from Winifred's booth.

When in close proximity to the Parkins hut his small car, with hood down, was turned off the trail into an arroyo. From there, with a pair of strong field glasses in the early morning light, he drew the little shack right up to his eyes. He could see every crack in the unpainted planks, and by maneuvering, belly fashion, along the grassy slope, he gained a knowledge of three sides. In the rear a huge wolfhound lay curled in a heap, and the chain in its collar reached through the boarding, evidently permitting release from inside.

It was a dangerous moment, had a breeze from the north been stirring, for one whiff of strange flesh might have brought on a death struggle. With an automatic forty-five silencer drawn along at his right side, and a pistol in holster for close quarters, Carver drew a "bead" on the dog and awaited further developments. He watched the big brute with the eyes of a hawk, and noted through his glasses that the animal slept uneasily. It might have been the cold of early morning, but a wolf hound had never been known to shiver in less than zero weather. Carver was well posted on dogs. He was that

type of man at whom dogs never snapped or offered to bite. So, with silencer in readiness, he puckered his lips and gave a low whistle.

At once the big brute arose to his haunches and whined.

Something wrong about the premises was Carver's first thought. A dog of that breed would not bid for friendship with a stranger unless actuated by an instinct that a friend was near by. But it was no time to take chances. The first thing he thought of was that Parkins had not returned and the dog had been left without water or food. On the other hand a wolf hound invariably fought the stranger at its gate. They were never allowed to roam at large except in forest camps, or on extensive estates. The situation was altogether strange, and, to prove it, Carver rose to his knees.

He expected a wild lunge on the part of the dog but the brute rose to all fours and wagged his tail, whining the while, as he strained at his chain. That seemed full evidence that Parkins was not in the hut, and forthwith he stood up and walked toward the dog, now manifesting great joy. At the length of his chain Carver

reached out his hand, but with one eye on the hut—then he patted the dog on its head.

That settled the friendship between them. Carver then pulled out a chocolate bar and tearing off the wrapper reached out his hand. One sniff and the big brute took it into his mouth and practically swallowed it whole. He was starving—further evidence that the master was still at large.

After parting with his last piece of chocolate Carver walked to the front of the hut and tried the door.

It was locked.

He then took out a bunch of keys and tried to fit one in the lock, but none of them would enter.

Then he reached for his electric torch and peered into the keyhole—there was a key inside that obstructed!

Carver dropped to the ground, on his stomach, and with his automatic reached far up on the door and gave it a thump.

There was no response, whereupon Carver shouted—"Parkins" in a voice both harsh and loud.

"Wake up, you scoundrel, and open this door!

You can't play any tricks on us! We've got you surrounded! Make one bad move and we'll kill you!"

There was no answer—except the whining of the dog in the rear.

"What do you say, boys!" shouted Carver to his "phantom" companions. "Shall we burn the place down? Those in favor will raise their right hands! Unanimous, eh?—then bring the oil can," continued Carver, who shouted—

"We give you one minute to open the door—hush boys!—keep your eyes open, and cover this place. When I say the word put a match to the oil!"

Then all became still save the dog in the rear, which strained at its chain and sent up pitiful howls, as if baying at the moon now fading in the early daylight. No answer forthcoming he kicked at the door and it made his blood tingle as it swung back—wide open!

Carver jumped to one side and reached for his torch, with that in his left hand he searched the front room. It was a moment when courage had no chance to take counsel. The advantage now lay with the man that he sought. The glare of

the torchlight swung into each corner, all over the room, and under the bed, but only a shirt and some clothing lay on top of it. Parkins had been there recently for the imprint of his body showed on the coverlet and an empty bottle rested under the pillow. Next came the bath-kitchenette.

One glance into that and the story was told!

In his night clothes Parkins lay dead in his bath tub, his legs at the bottom and his dead body floating. His eyes, partly closed, seemed to stare at a picture, an old-fashioned daguerreotype. "From Mother" was printed at the bottom of the cheap little frame. On the floor were empty bottles, and one partly filled, was clutched in the dead man's hand. Evidently he had placed it there within easy reach, as he lay in the water refreshing himself—hours after his escape from Dreamy Hollow.

Making careful notation on a sheet from his note book Carver drew a rough plan of the scene to be given to Updyke. In a combination cupboard he found the remainder of a parcel of food, crackers and sausage, and a slice of cold beef. These were fed to the famishing dog, then

closing the door he hurried back to Patchogue, where he phoned Dreamy Hollow.

"Well—it's all for the best," said Updyke, not without a shade of sorrow at the tragic death of the man. "He was a stormy petrel, as I've often said, and he sacrificed his life upon the altar of booze."

"I'm thinking of Winifred," said Carver, huskily. "She——"

"Calm your soul on that point—she never loved him. He was thought to be a friend of the family, but she found that he was just an old-fashioned knave. She and I have talked over this whole matter, and I know what I say is true. Shall I phone her the news?"

"Yes, if you will. What shall I do about the corpse?"

"Just turn the whole matter over to the coroner, and if any questions are asked, refer him to me. There is no longer any chance of publicity. A burial notice among the paid advertisements. That's best for him, and best for all. After you have made your report to the coroner beat it for home and go to bed."

"But that wonderful dog—I want him! We already love each other."

"Go get him and take him with you. But don't you ever tell your wife that he once belonged to so and so. Just say that the poor thing seemed to have no master so you picked him up and brought him home. Now that is no lie."

"You are a great old bird, Henry. I'll do as you say. No use to talk with Julie, I imagine, except about the booth."

"That's all," said Updyke, "go on about your business and I'll pick up the matter just where you left off."

"Tell Mary that she may stand a chance to get that quiet little dinner after all," laughed Carver.

"What do you know about that?"

"I'm a married man and we fellows know everything!"

"That will be all from you! I may cut you out of my gold expedition, if you get gay. So long."

The death and burial of William Parkins received the exact amount of space that Updyke had indicated to George Carver—four nonpareil lines among the death notices—paid for by the

Updyke Agency. Henry Updyke himself wrote the announcement. And then came the search for the stolen funds which were quickly found within a hundred feet of the hut with only a thousand missing. The Quebec Agency was notified quickly and the bank officers were profoundly thankful. They wanted to reward the agent, but that was tabooed by a terse telegram.

"We never take money that we do not earn stop we sent the man up in your country to reform him stop we accept the liability as our own and are sending check today for a thousand. For all favors we thank you—signed Updyke."

At last came the evening when, without the least "fuss and feathers," Mary Johnson leaned back in Henry Updyke's big car and drank in the ozone of Westchester county. She looked a dream in her light summer furs and stylish coat that concealed her pretty party gown. Twenty miles whizzed by with little in the way of conversation when suddenly the car made a quick turn, and stopped in the shadows of a great boulder. Behind them lay Riverdale, and the black forests of Spuyten Duyvel loomed ahead, just across the East River, five hundred feet below.

The moon was now doing its best to light up the mighty Hudson. Nothing like this grandeur had Mary Johnson's eyes beheld. A thrill of ecstasy crept into her heart. A new world was opening before her, and all within the limits of little old Manhattan, where all kinds of worlds exist—pay as you enter and take your choice.

"I never dreamed of such splendor!" sighed Mary, her heart filled with emotion, which was just like most women, who cry when they are glad.

"Well, little girl, while you go on dreaming I'm going to say something to you," said Updyke, gruffly.

"I'm always glad to hear your voice, dear," replied the girl still awed by the scene.

"I love you!" exclaimed Updyke, in as harsh a tone as a frightened man of his size could muster.

"Say it again," said Mary, snuggling closer.

"I meant it the first time, and I never repeat," he fumed uneasily.

"Oh, do—just to please me," she whispered.

"No, mam!—what I want is a kiss!"

"S'pose we kiss each other—dear?"

"All right here goes," and with that Updyke took her bodily into his arms and held her there until the moon lady looked down and laughed at them. And when all was said, and the gardens of their two hearts had been merged into one, Updyke suddenly recollected the seats he had engaged on the Swathmere roof.

"I am hungry, Mary. Shall we jog along back?" he asked meekly, as if taking orders for the first time in his life.

"I could stay here forever," said she, putting her lips up to be kissed.

"Let's get married to-night," suggested Updyke, his eyes aflame.

"No, sir! with one good dress to my name—Never!" exclaimed the girl.

"Well, you hurry up those dresses. Your pay is raised one thousand dollars. Draw it to-morrow and go up the line. You ought to get a couple of 'em for that," said he, grinning.

"Thanks for the raise, dear, but I'll buy my own wedding clothes. I haven't thrown my earnings away. How about that little dinner at the——"

"Nuff said," replied Updyke, "but you just

keep those arms about me while I do the driving. They don't seem to bother me," said he, chuckling down in her pretty face.

At the Swathmere two tall hatted porters ran out to the car, and with much ado landed the guests under the canopied entrance, where they were met by the captain and escorted up-top to the table that Updyke had engaged.

"Does you know who that big fellow is?" inquired one porter of the other.

"I don't reckon I does. He don't look good to me, nohow!" was the answer.

"Well, be ca'ful of yo' step when you see him edgin' yo' way!" warned the other. "He's de bigges' ov 'em all—gits 'um goin'—and gits 'um comin'—is you guilty?—den kiss yo' baby good-by!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

FLIGHT OF A SOUL

BEAUTIFUL Dreamy Hollow, peaceful, charming—with the master always on hand. No longer in business he lived in a dreamland and never looked out except toward the sea. Alone, he lived in silence, with only the future state in mind. Alone!—not just that—for way up in the skies a sweet soul was waiting and beckoning to him. He could see her quite plainly as the veil lifted at night, and also, whenever he looked this way or that—those were terrible blows that the mad Parkins dealt! Only the strong of heart could have survived them and turned them to account—but Drury Villard, once the farseeing financier, only looked at the heavens and bided his time. Things earthly were now forgotten, and old friends forsaken, not with malice aforethought, but because of a tiny link missing—the mischief of a dreadful night.

To talk with himself was no trouble at all, but

to sit and laugh at his own jokes when no one seemed near lent a pathos to those who chanced to look on. But the Winifred of his first love heard him, and evidently applauded, for when unduly excited he ran to the window and clapped both his hands—then called out her name! Just why Mrs. Bond should cry and run out of his presence was a mystery to him. And Santzi, wide-eyed, when he took the master to drive, sometimes felt compelled to signal Jacques to turn back. To avoid passers-by the woods road was used, but the birds seemed to know that a friend was out riding. The blue jays shouted at him and he shouted back, as near in their language as he could imitate.

Then one day came a great specialist from over the ocean. A cable to Updyke told the date of his sailing, and when the big liner warped in at her Hoboken dock, he was on hand to welcome, and took the expert in charge. A few days went by before arrangements were ready, and certain experts engaged to help on the case. It was quite a big party that trailed the Updyke machine down from the city. Among them several nurses—one of them Winifred—with Carver's

consent—for hers was the one name that Villard seemed to remember—so Carver himself came along as her escort.

Of course Winifred had nothing to do with the others, or the lances and things—but she was there all in white, as the patient came to, and she was the first person he knew when he opened his eyes. There she was in the life, all smiles, with her husband, and Villard smiled at him, too.

"I—thought you had—all deserted me," said he weakly, but Winifred put a finger over his blue lips, and whispered——

"Don't talk, Uncle Drury—just rest—that's a dear. We're not going to leave you until you are strong and well! There now, close your dear eyes and go back to rest. We'll—not leave you —go back to sleep—back to dreamland—you'll soon be——" And with a smile on his lips Villard lapsed into slumber.

As the great surgeon looked on, a smile lighted his face, and with actual tears in his eyes he grasped Winifred's hand. He had risked his reputation in coming to "far-off America" on such a hopeless case. And to win!——

"Most wonderful!" said he. "There's nothing

that answers the call of returning reason as the voice of a sweet woman," he concluded, as he again grasped her hand, and this time squeezed it hard.

Then to George Carver he said: "You're the right kind, young man. You'll go far in the world."

In less than a week Villard sat out in the sunshine, with light blankets about him, and Winifred near. She read to him, sang to him, laughed at him, called him a bear, and teased him for trying to live alone.

"If you and George move down here and live with me, I'll will to you both, in common, a cold million dollars," said Villard eagerly.

"And me leave my dear little white cottage! Oh, how could you dare to tempt me, Uncle Drury!" she exclaimed, with a laugh.

"I mean it, little woman," said Villard, very soberly.

"Well, don't tell George that, please. He likes you now, and it might turn him against you. Don't you see, dear man, he wants to make his own way in the world!"

"He is right, little woman, and you are going

to help him, more than he will know," replied Villard, with enthusiasm.

"Well, if you just knew all about it, you'd think differently. He is so active, and so kindly, that he often steals out of his bed and cooks his own breakfast rather than awaken old lazy bones —that's me," laughed Winifred.

"It won't hurt him, and it shows his affection. He'll rise in the world—all good husbands do."

And so ran the days by until Villard, in sheer pity for Carver's young bride, sent her away in his car to the home that she loved. Then back to his old haunts he went straightway—to the window where the open sea came into view. From that point of vantage, somehow, he heard the voice of his old love, bidding him come—and with a prayer in his heart he lay back and died.

When Updyke came down to take charge of affairs, a letter was handed to him by the weeping housekeeper—Mrs. Bond's heart seemed broken!

"Don't cry," said he gently. "He's happier now than he would be on earth. There's a reason that's sacred, but you may take it from me that

for years he has waited impatiently for his time to go."

Seated in a deep leather chair Updyke opened the letter. It was short and to the point. It read:

DEAR HENRY: My will is in the Bankers Deposit Company vault room. The enclosed release is made out in your name. You will find instructions along with the will—your name is entered as trustee, without bond.

As ever, faithfully,
DRURY VILLARD.

And so passed from earth a man of big soul, whose wealth had not spoiled him, nor brought much joy. As trustee, Updyke soon fathomed the great heart of the man. Not one person having the least lien upon his generosity was omitted from his will. Only within the past month had Parkins' name been stricken from it—just scratched with a pen, and initialed D. V.—without giving reasons.

Each servant came in for a good start in life. Dreamy Hollow was to be turned into a home for aged and infirm nurses. His business was to be divided equally between his old partners to the extent of his holdings—three-fourths of the

whole. Of the individuals mentioned Updyke came first—he to have twenty thousand a year for ten years while settling the estate, and to Sawyer his watch and an annuity of five thousand a year if any misfortune should ever befall him. To Updyke's wife Mary, in token of her faithful attention to his affairs as they related to the Updyke Agency—twenty thousand dollars in cash.

And last, but not least, was his legacy to Winifred Barbour Carver, "share and share alike with her good husband, George"—one hundred thousand dollars—"and an additional sum of fifty thousand to their first offspring."

"In furtner acknowledgment of my high regard for the Carver family I hereby appoint Mrs. Winifred Carver chairman of the board of directors of Dreamy Hollow Home for Aged and Infirm Nurses."

"And through the veil to the great unknown,
Sped the soul of an upright man."

So wrote the girl, Winifred, as an epitaph for the tomb of Drury Villard.

THE END